



THE FAIRY PRINCESS

Frontispiece.

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SCENES IN
FAIRYLAND

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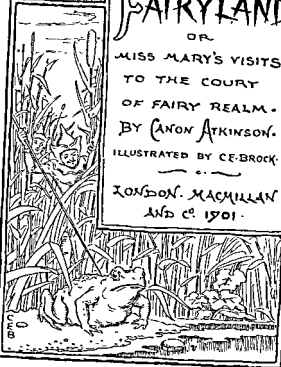
MISS MARY'S VISITS
TO THE COURT
OF FAIRY REALM.

BY CANON ATKINSON.

ILLUSTRATED BY C. E. BROCK.

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LONDON. MACMILLAN
AND CO. 1901.



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TO

"MISS MARY'S" MOTHER

WITH THE AUTHOR'S

AFFECTIONATE REGARD AND ESTEEM

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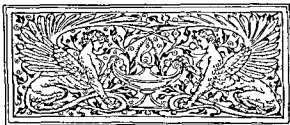
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I

MISS MARY'S FIRST VISIT TO 'FAIRYLAND'

DON'T you remember once, when there was that great deep hole dug into the Folly Hill, hearing a very funny sort of noise when we got into the deepest part of the hole, and kept from making any noise ourselves? It wasn't a buzzing, nor yet a humming, nor was it quite like whispering. Perhaps, if you can fancy those beautiful little foreign humming-birds trying to whisper to our beautiful peacock butterflies, and the butterflies humming back to the little birds, you will have some idea of what the noise was like. Well, there was a little old man there with a white nose and a greenish beard; and he had got his nose white with poking it into what he hoped would prove to be Fairy Rowers, and his beard green from having to creep so much along the grass to find the way in; and so, of course,

Perhaps you will think then that it must all be very dark and dismal there. But no, it is not indeed. If you can think of the beautiful pale moonlight being made almost as light as it is in the height of a lovely summer's day, without any of the bright blaze of the sun which makes one's eyes ache, or its heat that scorches one brown, then you will have a sort of a notion of what that ball-room is with its pretty plentiful soft lights. For all the lightness comes from what look like soft shining eggs as big as large melons, hundreds of them, hung up a bit below the ceiling, and every here and there something brighter still, but covered all over with shades made of the most delicate cobweb-gauze to keep the light nice and soft. The paler ones are large pearls dropped down from the moon; and the bigger ones are large diamond stars which the sun takes out of his hair when he goes to bed at night be'ow the sea.

It isn't everybody, as I said, who knows about this: but only Mr. Greenbeard and little Miss Mary, and I am going to tell you now how it was that they got to know about such things.

I told you that the old gentleman I just now mentioned heard the fairies talking, and one thing he heard them say seemed more interesting than anything of the sort he had ever heard before. For he heard a fairy lord say to a fairy lady-in-waiting, 'I do hope that old man that pokes his nose about so, won't poke it in just at the rabbit-hole not far from

the Green Bridge. Because, now all this great horrid load of earth they have dug out above us is laid on the handiest entrance to the grand pavilion, we can't go in and out as easily as we used, and our most convenient way is by that rabbit-hole, as those blundering mortals take it to be.' 'Oh no,' said the lady, 'there's no fear of that. For if he did find out that place, or even suspect what it really is, he'd be no wiser than all those other blind beetles called men and women and boys and girls.' 'Oh I don't know,' said the lord. 'He knows a good deal. But thank goodness, he doesn't know about that four-leaved clover that grows near the root of that big tree which kneels down on the ground so.' What he meant was that there was a tree which had grown so old and stout and infirm that it was obliged to rest a little on the ground on one side, with one or two of its strongest and heaviest boughs.

'Oh!' said Mr Greenbeard to himself, 'that pretty and precious flower grows there, does it? That rabbit-hole, as those muddle-headed mortals think it, is not far off. Thank you, my lord; I'll take your little hint.' So off he started, and took little Miss Mary (not the least contrary when she heard of his plan) with him. And first of all, they grubbed about for the plant. But it wasn't such an easy search as they thought. For there were two trees with their lower limbs resting on the ground; and they did not the least know which was the right one.

Miss Mary said it was one, and the old gentleman said it must be the other, he thought. And you know he hadn't got his beard so green all for nothing. So he began to creep about on his hands and knees,



Mary and Mr. Greenbeard searching for the four leaved clover. What he called out was: "I've got it at last."

and look very closely at all the plants, and especially at anything that looked like a clover. And he soon found there was not so much as one single sprig of clover near one of the trees, and that there were several plants near the other, the one he had thought

the most likely. And he made his beard greener and greener, and at last he called out so that Miss Mary heard him quite plainly: and what he called out was, 'I've got it at last.'

She did nothing but laugh at him, at first. But when he put just the least little bit of a leaf into her hair as she was looking at a little toad-stool that was growing close by, and all at once she saw it start up and widen and become all like beautiful silk, and turn into the most beautiful garden-tent, much handsomer than any that can be seen at Primrose League meetings and Garden-parties and Flower Shows, she began to think that perhaps Mr. Greenbeard had really found out something wonderful. So the minute he took the little leaf out of her hair, and put it so that he could carry it safely she took his hand, and they went together to near the Green Bridge and began to look for the rabbit hole.

But there were such a lot of rabbit holes! How was he to know the right one? Well, first he looked them all over quite closely. And as to some he saw that rabbits were in the practice of going in and coming out, and he felt quite sure they could not be the right ones. But presently he saw another place that was not a tree which grew so as to look like a rabbit hole, and he decided to try it. Why he took a plant of clover which he had been carrying till it was a large, round leaf and what he did by this time

had got a beautiful golden-coloured flower upon it, and held it close to the hole that had something the shape of an archway. In a moment the two roots began to look quite shiny like marble. Next he touched them with the flower, and they began to grow wider and higher. But such a strange thing happened that very same instant ! Both he and Miss Mary began to grow less and less till she was no bigger than a doll which walked and talked, and said ‘ Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,’ and he was only as high as a boy’s walking-stick. And then they saw a door all gold and silver just inside, and when the old gentleman touched the door with his plant, as if he was knocking at it, it opened quite wide, and the two of them walked in together. It was a long wide passage, like a walk under beautiful trees arching overhead, and there were such strange-looking birds flitting about in the branches, and butterflies all over jewels, and great pears and apples and oranges growing on them ; and if you tried to gather them they opened and showered out the loveliest sweets, and preserved apricots and greengages and cherries, and all the sweetest things little Miss Mary had ever dreamed about. She wanted to stop and gather them up, and put them into the dearest little baskets that ever a little girl saw, which stood about quite handy, so that she might carry them home to her sisters and little brother. But the old man said, ‘ No, you had better not stop for them. There’are

seen coming in procession. They were the loveliest little glow-worms, and no two of them had quite the same-coloured lights. Some were like flame, some rosy, some pale blue, some like emeralds, every flashing colour you can think of. But after these torch-bearers came the Princess and all her court. But I can't tell you properly about all these things, or about the quantities of flowers all made of diamonds and pearls, and other lovely things, and how Miss Mary took out her handkerchief, thinking it was a pity they should be wasted lying about on the floor so, and how astonished she was when her handkerchief seemed to grow as big as a sheet; and then she found out for the first time how very tiny she and the old gentleman had both grown, so little that they weren't much taller than a big man's middle finger!

And this startled her so much that she waked up suddenly, and found it was all nothing but a DREAM!



II

MISS MARY WITNESSES THE STARTLING ADVENTURE OF THE HUMBLE BEES IN 'FAIRYLAND'

'**N**O, no,' said little Miss Mary, a little "contrary" this time. 'No, no, it wasn't all a dream. There was ever so much that we saw besides that, and which can easily be told, to show that it was not all a dream: but this old gentleman with the green beard can tell it as well as I can, or nearly so, and besides it is his business, and not mine. My business is to listen, and see that he tells it all right. So go on this minute,' she said to Mr. Greenbeard, 'and tell all about the beautiful Fairy Princess we saw, and all her lords and ladies and gentlemen, and all the lovely things we saw, and all about the Bumble-bees and the Dragon-flies, and

everything; and mind you don't leave one single word out.'

Well, what could the old man, who seemed much more qualified to make his nose white with grubbing, and his beard green with his seekings and searchings, than to tell a long story; what could he do but go on with the story when he was so bid? So he began something this way ---

'Well yes, we did see a thing or two; and no doubt it was not all quite a dream. It couldn't be, you know, when I actually measured myself, and little Miss Mary as well. Only, I can't really tell you how we had both grown quite the wrong way, both of us, and got littler and littler, instead of taller and stouter and stronger, as other young people do as they get older. But so it was and I soon saw it was a good thing we had grown shorter and slimmer and fitter to get into corners and passages and hiding-places than we should have been if we had kept our right size, for we should have been as much in the way as one of Miss Mary's father's haystacks and a load of new-led hay in the dining-room at Skutterskelf at a quarter past one o'clock.

'For there was such a rout came into that tall, beautifully-lighted, and gorgeous pavilion just under the Folly Hill I told you of. First came a grand Fairy Lord with a wand such as you never saw and never dreamt of before, whiter than snow and brighter than a moonbeam, and set with a jewel that

Because, if not, you must, the very first time you can get an opportunity, and then you will understand my description of the clothes the Lord and the pages wore, their coats and robes and everything: for they looked as if they were made of silk spun from the very finest gossamer you ever saw on a bright autumn morning, piled all over with plumes from the most gorgeous butterflies' wings that ever flew.

'Well, but I am stopping the entering procession all this time, trying to tell you of these wonderful things; but I am sure I ought not, because the beautiful *Imperial Princess of the fairies* was making her entry just after the fairy maidens. And she was *such* a LOVE to look at! It was a good thing that we were so little ourselves as to be able to hide away a little; for we should have been ashamed to be seen in our everyday clothes in such a bright glowing company as that.

'But the Princess. She was, as I said, *such* a *love* to look at. She was very tall for a fairy, and moved like the fairest of all her Queen-mother's beautiful daughters. I should think she was nearly a quarter of a yard high, and most of the chief fairy ladies were only about six inches tall. I dare not even try to tell you how she was dressed; but the coronet she wore on her head, and the lace that fell in summer-cloud folds about her—well, there's no such thing as describing them. All I can say is that the dazzlingness of the jewels in

birds in the world, you would have a little sort of a notion of what that fairy dance was really like.'

As for Mr Greenbeard and Miss Mary, they were so enchanted, so wonder-stricken, that they quite forgot about keeping as much as they could out of sight; and so they got a little farther and a little farther out of their corner, till at last they stood quite in the bright, soft, clear light of the suspended lamps; though of course not at all in the way of the dancers. But the Fairy Lord with the wand—I suppose he must have been the Fairy Princess's Lord High Chamberlain—saw them in a moment, and came directly to where they were standing. Little Mary was in such a fright, and even Mr. Greenbeard was a little apprehensive. However, the Lord did not make himself the least terrible, or even disagreeable. He only said, 'Little People'—and fancy a Lord who wasn't himself as tall as a baby-kitten standing on its hind-legs, calling both Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary "little people"! But that only shows how very small they must have grown without altogether being aware of it—'Little People,' he said, 'you should not be here in such shabby clothes, which are not even fit for the Fairies' rag-bag. You should have put your best on before you came in at the Grand River Archway'—and fancy calling what, on the outside and as mortals see, only looks like a tolerably tidy rabbit-hole, a 'Grand Archway'!—'or else have got a mole

the coronet would have put out the eyes of any of Queen Victoria's ladies; while the lace would have made them all turn green and yellow for envy.'

'But the music! Oh! you should have heard that! And then, when the Princess had been conducted to her throne, which was set under the highest part of the pavilion, and had one great gorgeous flower like a Japanese lily only far more beautiful outside than any mortals ever see are inside, sweeter than a whole garden-full of ordinary earthly ones, to serve as canopy, and when the floor, all laid with crystals and sapphires and topazes and other grand jewels in such a wonderful way, began to be covered with the fairies who were going to dance, you would have wanted at least twenty pairs of eyes to see half the prettiness or a quarter of the lustre and glory there was there. Did you ever see the sea on a glorious summer night with the moon shining down very brightly on it, and thousands and thousands and thousands of little dancing ripples all lighted up, and glancing and shimmering and smiling and sparkling as the moon-beams kissed them all in a moment, and every moment? Well, if you try to think of that picture, and to fancy all that shimmering and sparkling and glancing and dancing all lit up with the colour of the rainbow and the hues of the diamond, all the loveliest flowers and butterflies and all'

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to lend you his best velvet coat and robe. But don't be afraid' (this he said to little Mary, who was trembling a good deal), 'I am not angry with you and the Princess is fond of little mortals who are kind to living creatures, butterflies and ordinary flies, and wild mice, and all such things, and would not be pleased if I sent you away in disgrace: which I should have been obliged to do if you had been cruel and unkind to living creatures. And so I will make it all right for you both.' And he just touched them with the bright gem at the tip of his wand, which made them both wink very much, and their eyes water like anything, with its clear brightness, and in a moment they were clothed in such lovely raiment, you can't think! They looked at one another, and then at themselves in the glass and they didn't know one another nor yet themselves the least in the world. Little Mary had just time to think to herself, 'Well, if I have to go to church next Sunday like this, I shall have to hide myself under the seat all the time,' when the Lord Chamberlain took them both straight to the Princess, and said who they were and how they had come there, and what he had said and done to them. And the Princess made answer, and the sound of her voice was like the sound of the delicatest and softest silver bells you can even think of, 'Quite right. Give them some supper,' and, as she said so, she smiled down upon Mary so sweetly, and

pretty bright pearls dropped out of the smiles, and Mary was told to pick them up and put them in her pocket, for they might be useful to her; and at least they would teach her how to smile nicely, if she only remembered to smile as the Princess herself always did; and that was in kindness and goodwill to all that was poor or weak, and especially all that was good and true and lovely in life.

Well, next they were taken to get some supper, and SUCH a supper it was! All the mortals' food they had ever tasted was like bran and dust and sand to those dishes, and all they had ever had to drink before, like water out of a wash-tub compared with the fairy wine which was set to their lips there!

As soon as they had done their supper—and you may be sure they did not hurry over such a feast as that, when every sweet, tempting dish came to them of its own accord, and the wine-glasses (each made out of single crystals or sapphires or emeralds) came to be drunk from exactly as they were wanted, and set themselves down again without any spilling or trouble to the drinkers: but as soon as they had done supper, they were taken back to the presence of the Princess; and they saw in a minute that something had happened, or was happening; for there was a little confusion among the bright fairy throng, and . . . individual fairy was looking up .

as big as an ordinary lady's bracelet. This was laid down at her feet just clear of the steps to the platform her throne stood upon; and she came down the steps and took her stand just on the top of it. Then she just touched a little spring that did not show, and up, up, up she went, not rushingly, or bustlingly, or noisily like a rocket, but quietly, easily, steadily, gracefully, till she reached the exact place where she had seen the crack. And it was true. There *was* a crack there, and what was worse, she saw it was getting wider and larger and more serious every minute.

By this time the Lord Chamberlain had fussed himself on to some sort of an elevator he had had brought in, and he too had mounted, but much more in the way of those beautiful globes of different-coloured fire we see thrown up out of Roman candles and such like fireworks, with sudden jerks and shoots. But the Princess ordered him down again directly, and told him to go and hasten the masons and their tools and the strongest and biggest elevators they had about the Pavilion — because there were plenty of them, and they were continually wanted to attend to those lustily-hung lamps I told you of, and for many other things besides that.

But he had hardly got down to the bottom before the crack widened so as to let in two sunbeams, which struck right through and down to

part of the pavilion just above the throne of the Princess. Whatever could it be?

Some said one thing and some said another. But the great Lord said, with just a touch of anger as well as scorn in his tone, 'It was those pestilent people who had been working in the outside world, at the place they called the Folly Hill; and a good name it was for such silly proceedings. It might well be called "folly," he thought. And they had made a crack in the ceiling, and it would have to be looked to, and the silly people outside told—taught, if necessary—to mend their manners.' In answer to this harangue the Princess said she was sure she could see the crack; and her eyes were so amazingly sharp that, when she said she could even see the light through it, everybody was sure she was right. So it had to be seen to at once.

Well, the Lord Chamberlain sent for the fairy masons at once to come and attend to it. 'No, no,' said the Princess, 'I can't wait for them and their slow ways. I will go up myself and see what is wrong. Bring me my elevator.' Four of the pages flashed away at once, almost before the words were quite out of her mouth, to fetch it; and in less time than it takes me to tell you about it, they came back with a lovely blue velvet cushion, on which there lay a gold ring, very strangely and curiously worked with wheels and springs, and all sorts of delicate machinery inside, and it was about

as big as an ordinary lady's bracelet. This was laid down at her feet just clear of the steps to the platform her throne stood upon; and she came down the steps and took her stand just on the top of it. Then she just touched a little spring that did not show, and up, up, up she went, not rushing, or bustlingly, or noisily like a rocket, but quietly, easily, steadily, gracefully, till she reached the exact place where she had seen the crack. And it was true. There *was* a crack there; and what was worse, she saw it was getting wider and larger and more serious every minute.

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the middle of the fairies' ball-room floor, exactly in front of the Princess's throne. And a bit dropped out of the edge of the crack and fell on to the top of her elevator, heavy enough to make it begin to go down so rapidly and dangerously that the Princess was obliged to take care for herself lest there should be a hurtful accident. So she just lightly leaped on to the sunbeams and slid gently down: and it was *such* a sight to see! One did not know which was the brightest and the bonniest—the Princess or the sunbeams—as she slid down by them, gracefully and gently and quite unharmed.

But what happened next was much more serious. Fragments began to fall with quite a clatter from the crack, and there was great disquiet and uneasiness among the fairy host below. Presently the hole which the sunbeams got through, and without any struggling, was seen to be darkened, and something like a noise of struggling was really heard, and more broken pieces fell down; and then all at once the darkening object was out of the way, and the hole was seen quite big enough for several more sunbeams to get in at; but there was also heard another noise—such a buzzing and humming as if there was a whole host of angry bees all buzzing against one another and everybody else.

But the loudness of the sound was mainly because the vaulted ceiling made the buzzing sound so much louder than it would have done out-

side. What really caused it was a monster Bumble-bee, which had made its nest in the earth above the crack, and which had got itself entangled in it, and in the hole, and had crept and crawled and buzzed its way through, and now was buzzing away in the vault above like a bee bewitched. Then it began to fly wildly about, and still more like a crazy bee. It dashed first at one of the bright lamps, like big ostrich eggs, that hung all about up there, as you remember, and then at another; and in this way it began soon to make itself stupid and dizzy as well as crazy; and soon, hitting itself an awful crack against the biggest egg-lamp, it quite stunned itself, and began to fall down, down, down, but turning round and round, and buzzing madly all the time, till at last it reached the floor with a dull bump; and there it lay on its back buzzing and whizzing, and turning round and round, just like a spinning-top gone crazy.

This would not have mattered so very much, and I daresay would only have made the fairies laugh, even although it kept darting out its horrid long sting as it whirled round, so that nobody could go near it, because, as it whizzed round so quick, its sting was in all places at once. But there was something else that did matter, and mattered a good deal too. For the big old Bumble-bee's nest fell through also, almost directly, and it had ever such a lot of young-bee cases or cocoons in it, each with

a bumble-bee inside ready to hatch, and the moment it fell to the floor the cocoons began to open and send out the big yellow-bodied bees; and being disturbed by such an uncomfortable hatching, they were as cross as honey-bees when their hives are upset by a honey-stealing bear. And in a very short time indeed, they were gathering round their still-spinning old mother, and seemingly ready for any amount of mischief.

Seeing this, the Princess sent off two pages in haste to the Lord Colonel of the Fairy Dragon-fly Horse, and two more to the Fairy Long-legged Spiders, and six others to the masters of the Fairy Wax-making Bee-skeps, and they were to order my Lord the Colonel to bring up with all possible speed three companies of the smartest Dragon-fly-mounted Elves, and the other officials to bring two squads of the fastest and strongest Spinners, and three swarms complete of the Royal Fairy Wax-brigade. Besides, two other pages were sent to the Warden of the Pine-wood Tree-fairies, to order him to send in at once seven bundles of the needles of the porcupine-leaved pine, and serve them out to the soldier fairies as they arrived.

The orders were hardly given before they were attended to and obeyed, and in a very few moments the drums and trumpets of the Fairy Dragoons were heard, and the gay Dragon-fly Elves came flitting up, and it was seen that each of them had a porcupine

pine-needle in his sling, blunted at the end by the Princess's orders; for she did not want to kill the Bumble-bees outright unless there was no help for it, but only to disable them from doing any harm. And then a few seconds later the Long-legged Spiders came with great balls of web ready spun, and the Wax-makers were busy buzzing ready for their work—though neither they nor the Spiders knew at all what it was they were specially wanted for.

It was time, however, for some help to be brought: for the brown and yellow-coated Bumbles had got to be as crazy as their mother, who still kept spinning round and round on her back and buzzing like a pigmy thrashing-machine in a stack-garth. And they were flying about in twos and threes, and others were gathering in sixes and sevens, and cleaning their wings and trying their stings, and one more cross or more daring than the rest had stuck his sting into the Lord Chamberlain's beautiful robe, and hung there buzzing and snarling and hissing worse than a wild pussy-cat with a sore mouth spitting. But he was very soon settled though; for my Lord very cannily managed to put the bright end of his wand to the Rumble, and its wings shrivelled up in a second, while one of the pages cut the sting through with the Princess's jewelled, gold-mounted scissors which she sent on purpose.

But this made such an uproar among the

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presently the trooper got a good chance too, and gave a hard prod under the other wing, and stopped poor Bumble's buzzing for good. And then you saw in a moment what the Spiders had been ordered up for. Two of them came and began to walk over and about the crippled bee, who could only crawl slowly and make aimless darts with his sting. The



The Bumble's wing shut up like a fan

Spiders' legs were so thin and moved so quickly, the sting never could touch them. But every time the spider crossed and crossed again, thread upon thread was cast upon the disabled bee, and in almost no time he was spun up into a sort of a long oval parcel, so tight that he couldn't move leg or joint of his tail, or even his jaws. And then the work of the Wax-workers began, and that was to cover

the entangled prisoner with wax ; and this they did so well and so quickly that in less than a minute what had just been a spiteful, buzzing, stinging bumble-bee was only an oval bundle of wax, something like a very large sugared almond in shape.

It was such a strange flickering scene, with all those gorgeously coloured Dragon-flies and their gay riders careering about, sometimes high in the air and sometimes lower down, according as the terrified Bumbles flew—and they flew just as stupidly as bumbles always do if they fly in at your open window when you are working or reading, hitting themselves lumbering thwacks against the glass of the window, or the ceiling, or the bookcases, or anywhere. But it was not long before all the brown and yellow-coated enemies were spun up, and dressed in their new shell-jackets, which fitted them like wax.

The next thing was to collect and lay them all in little rows side by side, and as near as possible to a queer-looking steel engine which had been brought in while the fight was still going on, and placed on the floor just underneath the crack and exactly below the hole. It looked, Mr. Greenbeard said, for all the world just like an old-fashioned buckle, such as gentlemen used to wear on their insteps in the old days, only a thousand times more complicated. Well, upon this was placed a strange-looking basket-like affair, which was really a fairy

mason's hod ; and in the hod, with some trouble because of the weight of the waxed-up Bumbles, three of them were put at a time, and then a spring was touched, and—Hullo! stand out of the way! up goes the hod, like a cricket ball when the bowler shies it straight up into the air after getting a man out ; and just as the hod gets outside the hole it stops short, and out leap the waxed bees, and down they tumble into the hole in the Folly Hill. You may be sure it did not take those active workers down below very long to get all those waxen mummies packed into the hods and shot out above in the same way as the first, and then the fairy masons began their work of repairing the damage. But of course, what with the fairy vaulting-stones, and the fairy mortar, and all the chippings and splinters and dust, and so forth, the fairy dance was put an end to, and the funniest thing of all was the manner of the ending of it.

When ordinary mortal gentlemen and ladies go to ordinary mortal balls, there's always at the end an awful lot of fuss and noise and confusion and clamour, calling for carriages, and getting cloaks and hats and wraps, and nobody knows what, before one can succeed in getting away, and then the lights are slowly put out, and the tired and yawning servants creep about, and it is long before all is really still and quite over. But here it was so different. The Fairy Princess made a gracious

sweeping bow to the hundreds and hundreds of fairies present, as if bidding them good-bye, or, in other words, "dismissing the assembly," and then, in a moment, before you could wink once, she and every one else, and the lights, and the pavilion, and the very hall itself, and everything, was gone! All was dark! All was quiet! All was as if nothing had happened, or ever had happened! No bees, no masons, no elevators, no crack, no hole, no nothing! Only Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary: and they were lost! They did not know where they were, nor the way they got there, nor the way out, nor whether they could get out at all, nor anything. So Mr Greenbeard groaned, but I am sorry to say Miss Mary, now "quite contrary," only grinned. It was so dark the old gentleman could not see her, or else I can't say what he would have done, or what he would have said. Perhaps he would have been very cross, and then Mary would have been frightened. But perhaps, also, he wouldn't, but would only have laughed at her. But any way, he only groaned again.

So Miss Mary said, 'What's the matter, you poor old man?' But he only groaned another groan and said, 'Here we are in the dark, and we can't find our way anywhere, and much less out of this dark hole. And besides——'

'Well, what besides?' asked Miss Mary, quite sharp, when he hesitated, and then stopped without saying any more.

'Oh! never mind, dear little girl,' he said, 'we can't get out, so nothing else signifies.'

'Why can't we get out?' she asked back

'Why, because it is all dark, and we don't know our way. And there's nobody to tell us, and nothing to show us. And we can't even feel our way. Oh dear!'

But Miss Mary didn't say 'Oh dear' at all. She seemed quite cheerful, really. And in a trice she put her hand into her pocket, and took out one of the Princess's smile-pearls, and it was so bright it was just as good as a very bright carriage-lamp. And then she put her hand back again and took out another, which she handed to Mr. Greenbeard, and then she laughed out loud, and said that now they were as well off as if they had been seated in a carriage with a pair of horses, with the brightest of lamps, going home from a party, and so they began to try and find their way.

But it wasn't so easy to find after all; and they made a good many mistakes. Because, as they came to understand before long, there were many other ways leading to the hall and grand pavilion under the Folly Hill besides the one from the Green Bridge—which was the particular one they wanted to find, of course. But at last, after ever so many mistakes and wrong turns, they found the right one; and they were quite sure about its being the right one, because there lay, just there, a bit of blue ribbon which had dropped off Miss Mary's frock; at least.

it had been on her frock that very morning, and they both of them knew it the minute they saw it.

But 'Oh dear!'—and it was Miss Mary who groaned 'Oh dear!' this time; and Mr. Greenbeard did not ask her 'What was the matter now?' for he knew very well the moment he saw the ribbon. It was but a little bit, just the tail-end of a bow; and yet it was longer than Miss Mary herself, and more than half as long as he was with his highest-heeled boots on! And that made them think what little humpty-dumpties they both were; and how on earth were they to get back to their right size?

Well, they dragged the ribbon along with them, not even Miss Mary being inclined to chatter much now. Suppose poor lazy old Smut even were to see them! Wouldn't even Smut be ready to hunt them? Or Max! Why, that would be worse still. For he would be quite sure to take them for very big mice, or very smart young rabbits dressed up to go to a garden party, and catch them in his big mouth just for the fun of the thing. Or even if he only just set one of his four big paws on them by mistake!

However, all things, even wanderings in Fairyland, and all the perplexities it leads to, come to an end sooner or later, and the Arched Entrance was reached at last, and after looking out very cautiously—taking quite anxious little peeps to see that neither Max, nor yet the cat, nor anything like a cat & a crow, or even a full grown rabbit, were in

the way, they ventured out. And there they were, "poor little people," as the Lord Chamberlain had called them—poor little things, not six inches high poor dears, and Miss Mary feeling quite sure that even if they could manage to creep up that long sandy path from the bridge up to the gravel before the house, and get to the front without any unlucky mishap from dog or cat, they would never be able to mount up those tall stone steps that led to the door, and as to opening the door or ringing the bell, why, a good-sized brown doll, that could not stand by itself, would be quite as good at that work as themselves! And even if they could manage to help one another up the steps, and get into the hall, what would happen then, when the butler or the footmen saw them, such objects as they were?

Miss Mary, as she thought of all this, was almost ready to cry. And besides, she was feeling both tired and hungry : for she had found out that Fairy feasts only made one want homely meat and pudding all the more : so there would have been plenty of excuse for her if she had had a good cry. But she was a brave little girl, and she wouldn't.

But still she was very unhappy about it all. And to tell you just the very exact truth, she was just a little cross and snappy when, all at once, just in the middle of her trouble and distress, the old gentleman broke out into a loud laugh, just close to her ear.

'What are you laughing for?' she said quite short, 'I am sure there is nothing to laugh at.'

'Oh, but there is,' was the answer; 'put your hand in your pocket again, Mary—the other pocket this time—and pull out that little four leaved plant we got before we found our way in. See, I have got mine already. Pull it out, and throw it away; now, just the same instant I do.' And no sooner was that done than, in a twinkling, they began to grow and grow, and widen and grow taller, till they were all but their right size again—when, in a flash, Mary did not know how it happened, but she heard Nurse's voice saying to her, 'Well, Miss Mary, you have had a good sleep this time! But wake up, and don't go on dreaming any longer, or making such noises and jumps in your sleep. Make haste, or you will be quite too late for tea.'

So Mary jumped up, and rubbed her eyes, and shook her head, and said, 'I told you I knew there were no such things as fairies. It is all stories, and I don't believe a word of it.'

And then she said to herself a minute or two after, 'I'll never take another walk with that old Greenbeard. He's always playing me some trick.'



III

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF MISS MARY WITHIN THE 'FAIRYLAND' DOMAINS, SHOWING HOW THE FAIRIES PROCURE THEIR JEWELS

IT is not to be supposed that little Miss Mary forgot that wonderful adventure of hers and Mr. Greenbeard's in the Fairies' grand ball-room beneath the Tolly Hat. Other people might tell her it was only a dream, and others again that it was only a story invented by Mr. Greenbeard; and even she herself might be quite sure there were no such things or beings as fairies, and that it was "all stories together" when people talked about fairies or 'old fairy tales'. But for all that, she felt very certain in her own mind and thoughts that, after all, there was 'something in it' and that even if there were no

blade of grass that she hadn't noticed and examined. But there wasn't a plant or a herb the least like what she was looking for to be found anywhere near. There was not a single leaf even of the commonest clover, either red or white, anywhere to be seen.

It was no use rubbing her eyes, as she was ready



She looked and spied and searched all about

to do, and indeed did, over and over again, because she remembered quite well that there had been really a lot of clover there when she and the old gentleman had looked under the right tree that last time; and that it was among this lot of clover-plants that he had at last, after a long and painstaking search, found the real plant. All the same, now that she had come by herself to look, there was

not a chance of finding it at all, not even as much as one single plant.

It is at once to well supposed, puzzled her very much indeed; and it was not very long before her old friend found out that there was something she was troubled over. For when she went out for a walk with her, she did not run off here and there to look for birds' nests, or to find sticks to fight him with, or cherries to throw at him, or even pull at his hand to make him come quicker the way she wanted to go. Nay, she did not even talk to him much, and much less chatter as usual. So he was quite sure there was something the matter; but what it was he could not tell. For I think she did not want to tell either him or anybody else what her puzzle was about, or that she had been disappointed, or anything; because then she would have had to say *here* she had been disappointed: and of course when she still said so stoutly, 'There are no fairies: I don't believe a word about them,' she could not very well own that she had been looking for that mysterious fairy plant.

However, Mr. Greenbeard made rather a sharp guess, if indeed it was only a guess, about the nature of her trouble: for all at once he said to her, when he found how still and quiet she was, 'I say, Mary, shall we go and look for that four-leaved plant with the golden blossom, again?' Miss Mary, without thinking for a moment, said, 'Oh, it's no use. It

is all gone.'—'Is it?' said the old gentleman, as if very much surprised; 'but you know there was such a lot there that day we were looking. And that was only just this last week.'—'But it is all gone, I tell you,' answered Miss Mary, quite sharp. 'Dear me!' he replied, 'all gone.' That's very strange. Are you quite sure?'—'Yes, to be sure I am, you old blind-eyes. I went on purpose to look for it, just after I saw you through the library window, writing so hard you never saw me or so much as thought I was there. And there wasn't one single plant, not one single leaf even, to be seen. Oh, I do wonder what has become of it!'

'Well, Mary,' he said, 'it is only too true. For I had been there too, to see if there was a bit of the right sort left. And I found it was just as you have said. There wasn't even a fairy-ghost of a leaf of it. And I believe it was nothing but the jealousy of the Lord Chamberlain, who, civil as he was to us, could not have been over well pleased at finding we had got in without getting an Admission Card from him first. And so I think it is most likely he ordered the Grand Entrance gate-keeper to go and root it all up, but neatly and trimly, so as not to make everybody notice that the plants had been taken up and carried away bodily.'

Little Miss Mary was quite concerned and grieved at hearing this, and what she said was, 'Oh,

what a pity! For we shall never be able to get in again, and see all those wonderful sights and hear all that sweet music, and all the rest of that wonderful visit.' And she stamped her foot so that it was a good thing my Lord Chamberlain wasn't beneath it; for if he had been, all his little bones would have been crushed, and he himself stamped as flat as a flounder.

But old Mr. Greenbeard did not seem very kind, she thought, about her disappointment, for he only laughed at her, and said, 'Poor little Mary!' so provokingly that she caught up a great stick to beat him with. Only it was very rotten, and broke off short in her hand when she tried to use it. Then she felt a very, very little inclined to cry: only she wouldn't. And then she said, 'What are you laughing at? There's nothing for *you* to laugh at, anyhow; for I am sure you liked being there quite as well as I did.' But he only answered 'Perhaps I did. Who knows?' Yet, directly after, he just whispered to her 'Come along with me. Don't make any noise; and only walk on the grass, and as softly as you can.'

Well, Mary did just so; though she could not the least think what it was all for. And the old gentleman led her very gingerly along, till they came to a wild-rose bush, not very far away from the Arched Entrance—the hole, that is, that mortals took for a common rabbit-hole; and he showed her

a very strange-looking object in the bush, which seemed really to be growing as a part of the bush (as indeed was actually the case). It was as big as a large garden rose, or larger; though it grew more like the flower of a very large thistle. And all the fibres or hairy-looking parts it was composed of were green down below, where it grew out of the bush, but rich brown and red nearer their ends, so as to make the whole growth look more like a flower than anything else. Miss Mary thought it *was* a flower of some sort really, and wanted to pick it. But the old man soon showed her that it would want a strong sharp knife to get to it even, and much more to cut it out; and that anybody who tried would get his hands and arms very badly scratched if he did not take the necessary care. And then he said 'But I did not bring you here, Mary, to gather that pretty-looking bunch. It is much more useful to us as it grows there, in the midst of the prickly bush.' And then he put a strong leather glove on one of his hands, while with the other he partly opened the fuzzy growth of the top part of the mock flower, and showed Mary what looked like a tiny parcel neatly packed up in a pretty green leaf.

'Whatever is that?' asked Miss Mary quite eagerly. But he only said in answer, 'You look at me when I take the parcel out of its hiding-place.'

The moment he took it into his hands she saw he began to grow shorter and shorter, and thinner and thinner, so that in a few minutes he was only



He began to grow shorter and shorter.

just tall enough to reach to the mock flower; while, before he laid hold on the parcel, he had had to stoop to be able to reach to its hiding-place.

Of course he made haste to get the parcel back into the safe place, before he became too short to

reach it. And the very minute he had made it safe again, he began to grow taller and bigger and stouter, until, in a short time, he was of the same stature and size as usual.

Little Miss Mary's eyes were very wide open over this, you may be quite certain; and her mouth was wide open too. So no wonder it was a little time before she was able to say even as much as 'Oh!' But then the words came fast enough, and she wouldn't be content to leave off questioning till Mr. Greenbeard had told her all about it. And this was the story he had to tell.

Like her, he had gone to look after the four-leaved plant; only he had not waited quite so long first as she had. For he went the very next day, and found that even as soon as that, all the clovers had been entirely cleared out by some means or other. Well, he thought it was very queer, to say the least. And then he thought it was rather sharp of the fairy folk to have played such a trick as that. And the next thought he thought was, 'I wish I could play them a nice trick back again;' and then it came into his head how, perhaps, even that could be done, and done fairly well too.

So what do you think he did, and did that very minute, moreover? He went as fast as he could—for you know he was too old, and his beard much too green for him to be able to run very fast; but he went as fast as he could to what was called by

the fairies the Grand Entrance Arch, and the moment he got there he began to grope about and to search so closely that any one who had seen him would be sure to say he was looking for something he had lost. And so he was. And presently he called out (though not at all loudly), 'Here's one,' and he laid a smooth white stone he took out of his pocket upon it, whatever it was. Then he seemed to stop and consider a little; and he might have been heard by any one who was near enough, saying to himself, 'Ah! that was hers. And I stood more that way. That's where mine will be.' And groping and searching about as he had done just before, presently he called out again, but just in the same low voice as before, 'Ah! here it is.' And then he put another white stone on the IT, whatever it was.

The next thing was to seek about for something else, namely, a good spreading green leaf, not too thick, like those great clumsy burdock leaves, but such as to fold well; and at last he found this. But still he had something else to look for, and he went on looking and looking into all the bushes about there, until at last he lit upon that rose-bush with the queer flower-like growth in it, and he said to himself, 'That's just the place.' Then he went back to the white stones, and laid his green leaf down on the ground between them, and first he laid one of the things he had looked for and found,

and marked with a stone, and then the other, on the leaf, folding them up in it so as to make a neat little parcel—just the parcel which you know he had but now shown to Miss Mary, and by the effects of which she had been so astonished.

But I will tell you plainly that what he had found were the two leaves which he and Miss Mary had made use of that time they found their way into the Fairies' Hall, and which, you remember, they had thrown down just after getting outside the Arched Entrance.

So now Mr. Greenbeard was able to play a trick back upon the Fairies.

As soon as Miss Mary understood all about it, she was for going off on another adventure that very minute. But the old gentleman thought there wasn't time for a real good one just then, and that they had better go a little later. And so it was settled: for she made no objection to waiting a little when her old friend told her he had heard (in the same way as before, you know) that there was going to be something very well worth being present at, among the fairies that very afternoon; that, in fact, they were going to collect and lay in a large store of jewels, including a quantity of diamonds and other precious stones, besides a good few pearls of costly price.

But still, there was some little danger for a minute or two of Miss Mary quite falling out with the old

gentleman. Because, when she told him she should tell Nurse to put her very best Sunday frock on for her to go in, and all the other smart things that were usually worn with it, he only laughed quite out loud. Little Miss Mary thought the laugh a very rude one, and a very unkind one as well, and so for a minute or two she felt very cross. But the old gentleman asked pardon very prettily, and made her a speech which made her feel like laughing too; and then he explained what it was that had made him laugh so much. And I am afraid he called Miss Mary a name which, however, did not make her so angry as might have been expected. For he said to her, 'You little goose!'—and fancy saying that to such a young lady as Miss Mary! 'You little goose,' he said, 'don't you know that when we each take our four-leaved spray, and get to the Arched Entrance, and place it against the door, and find ourselves small enough to enter in at it, we shall, at the same time, have all our former fairy finery on, and shall not want Sunday frocks and smart hats, or anything of the sort?'—'Oh!' sighed Miss Mary, 'shall we really have all those beautiful things on again?'

'Yes,' he answered, 'all of them, just as fine and grand as we had them then. And so I think you had better not say one single word to Nurse about Sunday frocks or anything, for fear she should ask, "Where are you going, to want to be dressed up so?"'

Well, they got away in very good time, and nobody saw them going. They went direct to the rose-bush, and with very little trouble they got the green-leaf parcel out of the seeming flower, and they took it by turns to carry it, as quick as ever they could go, to the Arched Entrance—because whoever carried it began to grow small that very minute, and so by changing they kept about the same relative size to one another. Mr. Greenbeard carried it the last bit of the distance, and had got the leaf unfolded by the time they reached the Entrance. And they were but very little too big to get in at it the minute they reached it, because it also was enlarged a little by reason of the nearness to it of the four-leaved plant.

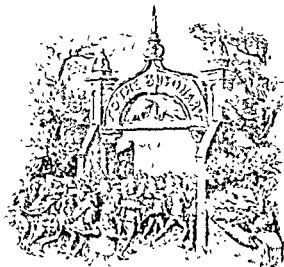
So on they went just as they did that time before, and they had not been inside more than a very few minutes before they saw a whole company of fairies and elves turning off to the right, out of the great beautiful arcade of trees, with all those wonderful fruits and every thing, that they had proceeded along before. And so they thought they had better go that way too. Presently they came into such beautiful green meadows, with such wonderful sheets of water, and some long winding channels out of them; and on both sides of those channels or canals, or whatever they were called, there were the loveliest trees, that would have been called alders and willows in Mortals'-land—at least I suppose so: but their

leaves looked as if they were all made of emerald and sapphire shavings, only bending as easily as real leaves; and their trunks and big branches looked like solid but unpolished cornelian and moonstone, so that they appeared quite as natural as ordinary willow and alder-tree trunks here.

A little farther, they came to a very large space all railed in, with posts of porphyry, and rails and bars and wires and network of the purest silver, that shone as bright as bright; and between the posts they could see sheets on sheets of glistening water quite alive with some sort of living creatures moving about along the surface.

Following the crowd as it went on moving all in one direction, they came to a big entrance gate, which had written up above it in large golden letters, TO THE BUFONARY. Well, this puzzled little Miss Mary greatly, which was not so very wonderful perhaps; because even Mr. Greenbeard, with all he knew, was puzzled about its meaning at first. But presently it dawned upon him. 'AVIARY,' he whispered to Miss Mary (for he had laughed out quite loud, and the fairies near were looking at him rather suspiciously), 'that means a place where they keep birds; and APIARY, that means a place where bees are kept; and, depend upon it, BUFONARY is the place where the toads are kept—what we should call a Toadery in plain English.' And then his sides began to shake, and his face became quite purple

with his trying not to laugh out loud, and his eyes became queer to look at, and Miss Mary began to grow a little frightened. However, he got over his longing to laugh presently, although his sides were



This came to a big entrance gate

still aching, and he drew little Miss Mary into such a sweet little fairy tower, which was close to a pretty boat-house, where there were several boats ready for use by such families as preferred to go on the water to see the sport that clearly was coming off. And

when he was able to speak again without choking, his first words were, 'I know all about it now. Don't you know, Mary—why, everybody knows that toads always have jewels in their heads; and you may depend upon it that all these wide pools and lakes and canals are the breeding and living-places of thousands and thousands of toads. And, my!' he went on, 'just look at them! What monsters some of them are. They are as big as bullocks! Ay, old Æsop must have heard of this place when he made up his fable about the frog trying to be as big as a bull, until at last it burst all up with trying.'

But even while he was talking he saw there was something strange going on in one of the widest sheets of water within sight, and the toads were beginning to croak in a confused sort of way; and then a whole fleet of boats was seen on the far side, all full of elves and fairies, and they were darting about here and there like water-ski or swimming dragon-flies, and wherever they came, the toads, big and little, tried to get out of the way, because the fairies had long poles tipped with fire—at least that was what it looked like--and if they got near enough to a toad to poke at it, the creature croaked a loud crying croak. Well, in this way the toads were all driven out of the water on to a sort of shelving shore, when several companies of elves and fairies in wonderful shiny green clothes—I think they must



have been poison-proof, so that the toads should not be able to spit or rub any of their venom on them —these green-garmented fairies, I say, began to pick out all the biggest and finest of the toads, letting the little ones slip by and get back to the lake, and as they came level with the great waddling creatures they just touched them on the noses with fire-spears, and the poor toads lost all use of their legs, and sprawled down flat on the ground.

Well, the old gentleman and little Mary, who were quite in a good place for seeing everything well, next saw a very strange and remarkable sight indeed. A number of fairies and elves, in shinier clothes than the others, only bright blue instead of pure green, came forward with little instruments that looked like battle-axes in their hands, only more like playthings than real weapons of war; and they danced about as if they were enjoying the fun of it all, as no doubt they were. For whenever they came to a great sprawling toad, with its eyes sticking out as toads' eyes always do so horribly, they just gave it a little cut on the head with their toy-looking battle-axes, hardly hard enough to cut even a midge's leg in two, and the moment they did that the heads opened wide, and there was the jewel fully exposed to sight. Some were great glistening diamonds, as big as a man's fist, and some were pearls as big as turkeys' eggs or oranges, and some were beautiful topazes or emeralds or sapphires, and some here and

there were not bigger than nuts or walnuts, and seemed not to be thought worth so much as the trouble of gathering them up.

Then the old gentleman and Miss Mary saw another quite wonderful thing. When the jewels were all taken out of the open heads of the toads—and some of them (I mean the biggest) gave a great deal



Scratching their heads as if they itched.

of trouble even to a dozen of the strongest elves, because they were so large and heavy—the heads that had split open for the purpose closed up again with quite a sharp snap, and the toads themselves got the use of their legs again, and began to waddle back towards the water quite cheerfully. To be sure, you might see one or two here and there scratching their poor old heads with their hind feet as if they itched a little : but mostly, they all seemed

ever so much livelier than they had been when driven out of the water. And I can easily understand that, for I should think you and I would feel much more comfortable after having something as big as our fist taken out of our aching heads.

Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary had been watching all these proceedings so closely and eagerly that they had never noticed what had been happening close to them. But a burst of fairy music, such as they had heard that time of the fairy dance, made them look suddenly round—and oh! wonder of wonders, there was the lovely Fairy Princess with such a number of her chief ladies and the gaily or gorgeously arrayed lords! This, as you may think, startled them not a little, and they were for getting away unseen from a place so near to Fairy Royalty. But the Princess saw them in a moment, and called to them in her sweet silvery tones—'Don't go, Little People. You can come here, nearer me; and then you'll see what comes next. And, little darling,' this was to Miss Mary, 'you come here to me, and let me tie this little veil over your face, for fear your eyes should get so much dazzled as to be hurt.' And she did really tie the gauze over Mary's eyes and face.

This made both Miss Mary and her old friend wonder what was coming next. And well they wondered: for they ^{had} ^{never} ^{before} just then the Princess in their lives. For Miss Mary, and gave the pearls laid ⁱⁿ ^{it} of pearls, as pretty as the smile-

pearls; and then she said, 'Do you know where you are?' And when Mary said she didn't know anything except that she was in the sweetest and loveliest place she had ever been in in her life, the Princess said, 'I am afraid you must bid it good-bye now; and you must go along this little stream, and up to that door you can see over yonder, and go out just as you went out that other time—only you will find yourself much nearer home. Good-bye, Little People, and come again soon.'

The very moment she said the last words they were at the door she had pointed out—such a beautiful one, of a lovely shot-green tint with panels of pure crystal—which opened of itself. . . . And what do you think it was which Miss Mary heard as plain as she had ever heard anything in all her days? Just the dressing-gong at half-past seven, for dinner! And there she was herself, lying on the grass nearest to the Skutterskelf Fountain, and old Mr. Greenbeard standing by her, laughing and waiting till she had rubbed her eyes enough to be able to get up and walk away into the house and go up to BED-DY-BY!



IV

ANOTHER ADVENTURE OF MISS MARY'S AT A GARDEN-PARTY IN 'FAIRYLAND'

I AM rather sorry to say that there was quite a coolness on Miss Mary's part towards Mr. Greenbeard for two or three days after that last adventure in Fairyland, in the course of which they had seen the way in which the toads—which were kept on purpose to supply all the precious stones wanted in the Fairy Court, and fairy world generally—were made to give up the jewels which, as everybody knows, regularly grow in their heads.

Miss Mary had two or three grounds of complaint, which we shall, all of us, think were quite reasonable under the circumstances. First, she did not the least like not being able to find even so much

as one out of the large handful of jewels the Fairy Princess had given her almost just the very minute before leaving that part of the under-ground fairy world which lies just beneath the fountain in the Skutterskelf garden. She persisted that Mr. Greenbeard had seen the Princess give them to her; and, as he was older than she was, and more thoughtful (at least she supposed so), and had good safe pockets in his clothes, he was the one who might have been expected to take proper care of them for her. And then, second, he had not even been thoughtful enough to take any care of the four-leaved plant sprigs, or even to remember what had become of them when they came forth into the upper world again. He had thought about it once before: why couldn't he again? she wondered. And then she called him some uncomplimentary name, which I can't remember: because I believe she was sorry a few minutes afterwards, and really wanted to say so.

Well, but the real truth of the matter was that she was sadly down-hearted about it: for these trips into the land of such wonderful scenery and scenes were so pleasant she would have liked to take one at least every week. And now?—well, they had lost what really was the 'key' that opened that bright fairy world to them. And to think they could not go back—never, NEVER go back! and even when that nice, kind, beautiful love of a Princess, with her very last words to them, had said, 'Come again soon,

Little People,' it was enough to make her cry, she said; and I quite agreed with her

And besides this, it must have been a little trial to her to see that Mr Greenbeard did not take it to heart so deeply as she did—nay, that he was even unfeeling enough to make a joke of it, saying such things as that 'it didn't suit his old bones to have, every four or five days, to shrink down to almost no size at all, and then, as suddenly, to have to lengthen and grow bigger and taller and stronger again, just with dropping a silly leaf or two. So that he thought that they—at all events, he for one—would do almost as well (if not better, indeed) without the fairy passport leaf than with it.'

One day, however, when she had been scolding him, and he had been teasing and chaffing her in this sort of way, she suddenly said to him in a coaxing, persuading manner, 'But don't you think—really, now—don't you think we might be able some day to find our way in again? Now, do tell me true, if you don't think we really shall.' Well, somehow—I can't tell you why, or give any explanation—it almost seemed as if the old gentleman either couldn't or wouldn't answer with a downright 'No, I don't think anything so foolish'; or even with 'How could we get in again without our golden-bloom "key"?' But all he said was 'Who knows?' or 'Who can tell?' or 'Do you think it likely?' and always with a smile on his face, which didn't look

altogether like 'disappointment' or 'no expectations'; and so Miss Mary grew to be a little more comfortable in her mind, without, however, getting to be very hopeful.

But one morning, just after the letters and other things that had come by the post had been brought in, old Mr. Greenbeard was seen to be undoing a very strange-looking parcel, which the man who had brought the letters in had said 'he could not tell anything about. The man who had brought the letter-bag to the house knew nothing about it, and how it came to be with the letter-bag when he fetched it there he could not the least tell. Only, there it was, fastened to the strap of the letter-bag, and with Mr. Greenbeard's name on it, though it had been a trouble to read it because the writing was so very fine, and the ink such a queer pale colour.'

Well, the moment Mr. Greenbeard got one corner of the parcel open enough to see what was inside, Miss Mary noticed, first, that he turned quite red, and then he turned that strange colour that had frightened her a little when he guessed the meaning of that queer word *Bufonary*. And then he said that he 'could not go on opening the parcel, or what he saw was inside, then—or, indeed, in that place at all. But when Miss Mary had done her lessons, and had been lying down the proper time, then he and she would see about it all—everything there was in it.'

You may fancy how well and quickly the young

lady got through her morning lessons ; and how she was sure she had been on her back quite half an hour before she had actually been quite quiet for ten full minutes. But at last all was done, and she was able to go ; and the place Mr. Greenbeard had told her he would be at was just the wild rose bush where that funny growth was, which had served for a place of safety for the little parcel which had contained the four-leaved sprays.

Well, little Miss Mary was eager to know what it was that was in the new parcel, and what he had to be so secret for. So he showed her the parcel, and how far he had opened it, which was only just enough to let him see that it contained a letter-bag ; but SUCH a letter-bag ! He had never even fancied anything like it ! It was quite clear, from the very little bit of it he had yet seen, that no mere ' mortal ' hands had had the fashioning of it. It had a lovely gold crown stamped on the lock-plate ; and besides that, on the other side, where Mr. Greenbeard's name was put in gold letters, were four other crowns of gold stamped, one at each corner. Miss Mary looked at the bag, with eyes that grew rounder and rounder, and wide open they were indeed. And then without any ceremony the old gentleman showed her the tiniest little note she had ever seen, written in that faint ink and thin-stroke letters, and which he had noticed sticking just under the flap of the letter-bag at one corner, which simply said, ' Look in the bush for the key.'

So the next thing, of course, was to get the key. Miss Mary at once said she knew where it would be; that it was sure to be in that funny fuzzy growth where the green-leaf parcel had been kept safe.

'Perhaps it is,' said Mr. Greenbeard; 'but how are we going to get at it? See! the bush is twice as thick as it used to be; and oh! aren't the pricks long and strong and sharp?'

Well, try as they would, there seemed no way of getting at it. Mary wanted to go straight off to the garden, and get one of the gardeners to come and chop it down—and chop it to pieces, too, if they could not manage any other way. But Mr. Greenbeard said, 'No, that would never do. There must surely be some other and better way than that,' and he tried to get under the branches, so as to be able to get up inside; but it was no use. He only got worse pricked that way than in his other trials. Then Miss Mary said, 'Fold your coat three thicknesses, and squeeze up against the bush with it in front of you.' But the pricks were too many for him that way also. And then the young woman thought of another plan, though I daresay she did not think it could be a 'way,' or lead to anything at all; but she said out quite loud enough for the old gentleman, who was right on the other side of the bush, to hear—'Oh, you dear, nice, sweet, kind Princess, couldn't you help us to get to the place where the key is kept so safe?'

I really don't think she expected anything to follow, because she was more than a little astonished—I think a little frightened—at hearing a small piping voice close to her ear saying, 'I'll get it for you, Little One.' And whether it was a green bird, or what it was, she could not tell, but something green, with a spot of bright red somewhere about it, flashed into the rose-bush in spite of the thorns and



A Fairy flashed into the rose bush.

everything, and in a moment the darlindest little gold key was slipped into her hand, and the wonder was that she didn't drop it out of sheer surprise. However, luckily, her hand closed tight upon it, and she held it fast and safe.

Mr. Greenbeard had no more notion of anything of this sort than he had of trying to get far enough inside the bush without any gloves on; and so, when Miss Mary called out to him, 'HERE'S the KEY!' he only thought she was dreaming really, and not even making fun.

But she was neither dreaming nor playing tricks; though she couldn't give a very clear account of who or what it was which had brought her the key. Still, there it was! There was no mistake about that. And there was no mistake either about its fitting the lock of the mysterious letter-bag. For the moment the old gentleman tried it—and his hand trembled so he could hardly get it near the key-hole—it just jumped in of itself, and almost before he knew, it turned itself half round—for it wasn't like a clumsy mortal key that wanted to be turned all the way round—and the flap of the letter-bag flew open of itself, and then Miss Mary was able to see what there was inside. First there was what looked in shape exactly like a lady's dress-basket, only it was so delicately tiny that it would have been only big enough for the clothes of quite the smallest doll that could be properly dressed at all. Then there was a bonnet-box just to match. Then there was a dainty jewel-box, rather large in proportion, perhaps, and a dressing-bag. Then there were several sunshades—oh! such beautiful colours, and the handles gold or silver, or some precious stone perhaps. Besides all these things there was a longish flat sort of a trunk, just like a gentleman's dress-suit Gladstone, but made of such leather as Mary's eyes had never seen before, and several other little cases of one sort or another, most of which seemed to belong to a lady's toilette. But

the most curious thing of all was a large card—large, I mean, by the side of those other things, for it was almost, if not quite, as large as a penny postage stamp!—with all sorts of blazonings on it, which might have been ‘fairy,’ for certainly they weren’t ordinary ‘mortal,’ consisting of gold figures of feathers and animals and things, such as heralds have cut on seals and such-like, and the royal fairy crowns dotted all about it. And there was ever so much writing too, only it was so delicately and beautifully small that the old gentleman could not read it at all until he got his botanical glass out of his pocket, and opened the strongest lens of all; and then he managed to read, though still it was as much as ever he could do, just as follows —

THE IMPERIAL PRINCESS OF THE FAIRIES

GARLEN PARTY AT FAIRY STAM COURT

MONTH OF FLOWERS DAY 100.

‘THE TWO LITTLE PINKS’

Well, this was too much happiness! To think of going to a Fairy Garden Party!! And by the PRINCESS’s own invitation!!!

But old Mr. Greenbeard, always matter-of-fact, rather cooled her raptures by saying in his slow, stupid, practical sort of way, ‘But how about admission? How are we going to find our way

inside? There's our card, to be sure. But what good is it as long as we are this size?'

Miss Mary looked quite blank for a few seconds, and then she broke out with—'But, *is there nothing else in the letter-bag?* And besides, what is there in all those dolls' trunks and band-boxes?'

'Well done, Mary,' cried the old man, 'you have hit the nail on the head this time anyhow.' Mary didn't know she had been using a hammer at all, she said, 'but what did Mr. Greenbeard mean?'

'Why,' he answered, 'here's a letter in the letter-bag which we have never noticed!' It was quite true. There *was* a letter: but it wasn't much wonder that it hadn't been noticed, for at the utmost it was *hardly a quarter as big as a postage-stamp!* To be sure, when her old friend let Miss Mary look at it through his pocket magnifier, it looked about as big as a gentleman's visiting-card cut in halves; but the writing was so fine and of such a singular colour, neither he nor Miss Mary could make it out in the least. So he put all the half-dozen lenses of the magnifier together, and then the letter was magnified enough to seem about the size of a lady's visiting-card, and the old gentleman was enabled to make out the writing outside, and next, that in the inside of the letter too, although little Miss Mary could not make head or tail of either. But the letter was directed to her, all the same, and in the Princess's own hand-writing too! It was to

tell her there was a suitable dress for her in the dress-basket, and that in the hat, which the Princess hoped she would like as well as the frock, she would find, folded up, a little cap, which she had only to put over her head, and she would be just the right



And then he managed to read

size for both frock and hat to fit. And then there was a P.S., namely—'The key that unlocks the letter-bag unlocks everything else'

Well, I can't tell you anything at all about the lovely frock and a'l the other things that were displayed when the trunk was opened, or anything about Mr. Greenbeard's suit, except that Miss Mary

said the clothes made him look quite young, as well as nice to look at.

But I daresay you'll be wondering how on earth they had managed to try the things on even, and much more get dressed ready for the party. But that is easily explained. You see, the letter-bag and everything in it were so light and handy that Mr. Greenbeard could carry them anywhere he liked or wished with only his little finger; and so he had carried them straight to the Arched Entrance, and putting on his cap—for there was a cap for him too, of course—the door opened to him at once; and there was the little green-clad door-keeper with his little red cap, who seemed quite to understand all they wanted to know: for before they could even try to ask any questions, he caused them to understand that this was the right day, and that they were expected, and that there were rooms quite near, and ready for them to change their dress in, and that the Princess wished to see Miss Mary the moment she was ready.

Miss Mary rather wondered how she would be able to manage, having to dress herself all alone, and no Nurse there to help her, nor any one. But there was not very much trouble about that, I think. For as soon as ever the dress-basket was opened, the pretty things—and you never saw or conceived of such pretty things in Mortals'-land, I am sure—just took gentle little flights and settled themselves

on to her in their proper places, fitting her as beautifully as if she had been born in them, and they had grown on her as she had grown, just like her own delicate skin. And almost before she had time to look if there was a looking-glass anywhere,



The little green-painted door keeper

she was quite full-dressed, and as bonny-looking as any fairy there except only the Fairy Princess herself.

Mr Greenbeard was ready too, and when they went out into that glorious arcade they both remembered so well, there were two fairy gentlemen-

in-waiting, each with a mother-of-pearl staff tipped with a large diamond, to conduct them to the Princess, who was still in her own private apartments. They were wainscotted and ceiled with material like the inside of those beautiful large shells, red and pearl colour, and shades of light-blue and pink melting into white; and the hangings were made of moonbeams and sunbeams woven up together, shot with threads of winter starlight, and with embroideries worked with tissue got from the streamers one sees darting and glancing through the sky when the 'Northern Lights' are at their most glorious. The different apartments were separated from each other by large and lofty curtains, and these curtains were fashioned out of—what do you think?—summer lightning (what mortals often call sheet lightning, indeed), such as you can see afar off on a quiet night in hot summer weather, glimmering and shimmering and broadly glancing, and making us wonder how it can be so harmless and pretty and wonderful.

But they only had just time to notice all this when the Princess herself came in; and she kissed Miss Mary again, just as she had done the last time, and then the fairy trumpets sounded, and in a moment one of the summer-lightning curtains rolled itself up quite out of sight, and the Princess with her visitors were in the midst of such a throng of fairies and elves, and other such

lightsome and beautiful beings, and then another great curtain, bigger than the last, rolled itself up out of sight, and they found themselves at once in



A lovely flourish from the trumpets.

a wonderful wilderness of gardens and pleasure grounds and pavilions, with all sorts of games ready to be played, and amusements such as we mortals can't even imagine; and flowers and trees and fruits and birds and creatures such and so many that five

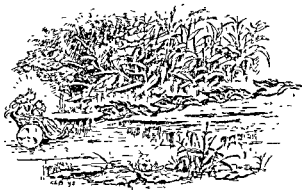
Noah's Arks couldn't have contained a quarter of the number there were there.

Naturally, in the midst of all these brilliant and gorgeous things, Miss Mary felt herself bewildered and perplexed, especially when she saw a great many of the fairies all mounting into a number of the most exquisite-looking cars, some hollowed out of large pearls, or else huge agates, or jaspers, or some other of the commoner precious stones ; and some of *frosted silver with beryl fittings*—but it really is no use my telling you about the materials of the cars ; it was the cars themselves and the creatures that were harnessed to them that were the wonder. Some had two glorious peacocks, some four, in front of them. Some had sky-mounting skylarks with gilded plumage, but not in front—*hovering over them!* One had twenty-four gorgeous humming-birds yoked! But this was for the Princess's sister, quite a little-girl fairy! but *such* a little beauty! Some had Golden pheasants, some had Paradise birds, and others even Lyre birds. But the Princess turned to Miss Mary and Miss Mary's old friend, and said, 'Will you have a flight in one of these cars? Or will you go in a boat drawn by my tame trout? What will you like? The Skylarks' car will take you up to the heavens, and let you see how the stars are fixed in their places, and how they polish them and keep them bright with that white powder which, when it gets dropped or blown about a little, strews that part

of the skies which ignorant "mortals" call the "Milky way." The peacocks, besides fanning you with their glorious trains, will carry you up and down over the tallest trees. The golden pheasants will take you in and out among the thickest trees, but without hitting against any of them, or their branches, or incommoding you in any way. What?—when the little girl didn't seem attracted by any of these excursions—'What, afraid of all these adventures? Then come with me in my own car. My little sister has her humming-birds, for they please her with their music and gay plumes. But you must see *my* birdies.' And she made a little sign, Miss Mary and Mr. Greenbeard could hardly notice it, it was so slight and so quick. But in a moment there was the most beautiful car, with emerald body and diamond wheels, and everything else in accordance. My! that was a car! And it was drawn by twelve kingfishers as fleet as the very wind itself. For the Princess said she liked them better than any other birds as harness birds, because they flew so evenly and smoothly, as well as quickly, and they always went best along the beautiful streams, where the trees all grew two ways at once, both upwards and downwards; and where the pretty flies frolicked about almost like the fairy people themselves; and the gay speckled trout leaped and sported, and were as happy as lovers, and with no cares at all either for to-day or to-morrow. And so she went on and


on, till little Miss Mary thought, 'Oh! if *on* MOTHER was here!'

Well, she chose—and I really don't see how she could hesitate even for a moment—she chose to go with the Princess; and the old gentleman sat down in a particular seat that the Princess showed him. And it moved off of itself, and helped him to see



It was drawn by twelve kingfishers.

such marvels and wonders as he had never thought of or suspected in all his searchings and studyings. But I can't tell you all about that—at least, now. It is Miss Mary and her adventure that I am thinking of; and what I have to tell you is that she got into the car after the Princess, and in a second the kingfishers sprang into flight, and away they speeded and flashed quite out from the fairy realm, all along the beautiful Leven, and then on to the wide Tees, and then

 ever so far up that river—not *down*, for the water grew very muddy and dirty that way. And as they careered along, they saw everything on the banks—flowers, flags, reeds, bulrushes, bushes, trees, birds, flying insects, creatures, everything; and everything in the waters themselves, great salmon, leaping trout, bright sparlings, creeping crayfish, baby insects, great dragon-flies ready to issue forth from their skin cases and be as bright and flashing as dragon-flies always are. Why, I think there was not a single thing, down to the pebbles at the bottom of the water, they didn't see. Mary saw so much, and all of it so beautiful and so wonderful, that she felt as if they must have spent hours in their drive; and then the Princess blew in a tiny silver whistle, and just in the time it takes a flash of lightning to go across the sky, the kingfishers turned round and they were at home again!

Then came games with balls—not tennis or bowls or croquet, or anything so 'mortal' as that; but it was a game played in the air, where the different balls chased each other as the players desired, and the balls were all lustrous, azure, and golden, and rosy, and lovely green, and they wound in and out, and up and down, and over and under, and when, after the most amusing and intricate pursuings, one player's caught another player's—say a golden ball caught a blue one—it just opened and took it bodily in, and became twice the size it was before. And

the player whose ball got the most of the other balls, and grew to be as big as a great school globe (as it might), he was the winner. And little Miss Mary played at this game and had a silver ball for hers; and because her arm was stronger than any fairy's arm there, she got such a lot of balls with her ball that at last it could not bound or fly any more, and so came slowly down to the ground. And as soon as it touched the ground it burst all in a trice, and all the dozens of balls it had taken in jumped up aloft into the air, and made Miss Mary fancy it was raining beautiful globes of coloured light.

By this time Miss Mary was getting a little tired and very thirsty. So the Princess called one of her ladies to her and said, 'Take the little lassie to the Hall of Delights.' But you'll never fancy what that was like. You must try and imagine a place big enough to fill a field twice as big as where the young pheasants live, all covered in with a palace built of blocks that looked like ice clouded slightly with milk, or of a pale pearly light-blue tinge, the walls thick and mounting up and up as if going out of sight, and fountains of different sorts of perfumes all about as far as you can see, all of them sweeter, as fairy essences would be sure to be, than Eau de Cologne or Lavender Water, Essence of White Roses or Eau Bouquet, or anything so common, and of at least a hundred different sorts, and beautiful little tables in beautiful little nooks, and little plates and cups and

glasses such as fairies use, and sparkling *beaufets*, and crystal and silver and glass in unthought-of tints and hues, and gold, with all sorts of cunning things to make one feel hungry and thirsty—yes, even if you had only just done dinner. And then you must think of little Miss Mary being asked what she would like? ‘A nice cup of tea,’ she thought in a minute, ‘and some nice thin bread and butter, just to begin with.’ But she did not say so, for she hadn’t time. Because the fairy lady laughed very sweetly—only not with pearls accompanying her smiles like the Princess—and said to her, ‘Oh no; we have nothing so outer-world-like as that here. But I will order you what you will be sure to like.’ Miss Mary never knew what it was, nor how it came before her. But there were twenty different things for her to eat, all at once, each nicer and more delicious than all the others, and all offering themselves just as she fancied this or that looked nice, and jewel-cups and crystal goblets just pressing close to her lips the moment she even thought of feeling thirsty, and the taste of the last always better than the taste of the one before. And then, besides, it was not possible to feel that she could ever have too much to eat or too much to drink, but that what she had had was just exactly the right quantity down to a grain or a drop. And what was even better than that, if possible, she felt so strong and fresh and active and brisk with all this fairy food, that she



V

WHAT HAPPENED TO MR GREENBEARD AT
THE GARDEN PARTY, AND HOW HE AND
MISS MARY CONFOUNDED THE MALICIOUS
DWARF'S PLANS

NOT very long after the time of the Ladies' Garden-Party we heard of a little while ago, there was, I am sorry to say, a little sort of a battle between Miss Mary and Mr Greenbeard. Miss Mary had called Mr Greenbeard 'Old Mr St-in-the-chair,' because he had sat down in the chair the Fairy Princess had pointed out to him the day of the party, just when she and Miss Mary were about taking their pleasant little drive behind the king's-here; and Mr Greenbeard had spoken some answering words about Miss Mary's fly-away conduct in whisking about through the air just like a witch in an egg-shell, and with only a butterfly's tail! She

replied that he desired to be called Greenbeard, rather than Greenhead, because he was no better than the grass which had to stop where it grew. 'Better that, he said, it is to be a hat which blinked in the sun, when it was made to sit in the daytime.' She said she thought that with wandered more than she had done in the flight she had taken with the Princess, and bolder, his beard grew greener and grayer than ever, and she would make him a rush cap to match it. At this little speech of hers he laughed outright, and added that he knew a certain young lady who had been ready to cry her eyes out because she hadn't got a green cap, and that no longer than a few days back, and who, moreover, had had them danced in again with glee when she found a green cap in her bonnet box. Then she called him a tiresome old tease, in acknowledgment of which name he made her just such a bow as the Fairy Chamberlain was accustomed to make to the Fairy Princess. But this teased her worse than all his words, and she made a snatch at his beard, in order to give it a regular good pull. But he cried out quite quick and sharp, 'Take care! pray take care!' 'It comes off!'

But he did not mean that the beard would come off. It was something else, and not the beard, which 'came off.' It was the green! For, on looking at her hand, the young lady found it was all smeared over with what looked like green paint. Before she

knew, she had touched the green with the fingers of the other hand, and then the green began to spread over that hand too. Then she tried to get at her pocket-handkerchief. But, having a very nice, pretty, fresh, white frock on, there were stains and smears and streaks of green wherever she touched it near the pocket, and in a second she thought, 'Whatever will Nurse say? and Mother too!'

She was serious enough now, and hadn't a word to say when the old gentleman remarked, 'Well, I think you'll let my poor beard alone another time.'

She kept still and silent so long that Mr. Green-beard grew quite sorry to see her so distressed, and so he said to her, 'Never mind, Mary. We'll find a way out of this trouble, somehow. Look at my hand. Do you see anything different about it?'

Mary looked at his hand, and tried out directly—'Oh, what a pretty ring! Where did you get it? Why did you never wear it always? I never once saw you wear one before.'

But he did not give her any answer in words: he only turned the ring partly round on his finger, and told her to look steadily at him, and see if there was nothing else she had never seen him wear before. And when she did as he told her, she was more than startled at first—almost frightened. For he seemed to be fading away before her eyes, like a shadow flitting away as the light clouds that cast it pass across the sun. But the next thing she did

was to call out *OH! OH! OH!* three times, and her eyes opened wider and rounder, for she saw a chain round his neck like a lady's watch-chain for fineness and delicacy, *only such as she had never even dreamed of before in the wildest dreams that had ever come into her fancy-led little brain.* For it was all moving and glittering and sparkling just as if it were alive, or perhaps more as if it were made up of living things, but all so light and slight and delicate that it was, really, *only a very, very fairy of a chain.* It seemed to be made up of tiny, glancing, gliding snakes all following one another as if they were separate, and yet somehow all holding on one with another; just, indeed, like a perfect chain. Oh, but the colours, and the brightness, and the sparklings, as they followed one another in that wonderful succession!

And then she saw him take gentle hold of the chain and draw at it as if he was going to take something out of his breast pocket that was fastened to it, and this, when he drew it quite out, looked like the tiniest and shortest gold and jewelled pencil-case that, as she fancied, could ever have been made. But though it was really something like such a thing as that, still it wasn't one truly. For she soon saw him begin to screw a tiny little top off. And then she saw him just slightly moisten the very tip of his finger and put it to the open end, and in a moment, just the wink of an eye, it was gone—

by his sitting, when butterfly bits of fly-away girls were sitting about at the tails of six pair of kingfishers.'

But Miss Mary was still so full of wonder she did not even resent being called a 'butterfly bit of a fly away girl,' and she only said, 'Oh, please, Mr Greenbeard, what is it? Where did you get it? Was it all through only sitting in the Princess's chair? What happened, what COULD happen to you just through your sitting down there? Oh, please, please, do tell me all about it.'

But Mr. Greenbeard said it was a very long story, as long as, or perhaps much longer than, her wonderful flying-drive with the Princess, all down the Leven, all up the Tees, and home again across the country, and he hardly knew which end to begin, or what part to tell her; or even how his beard had come to grow so freshly green that the colour actually came off when it was rudely handled. Miss Mary rather blushed a little when she heard the words 'rudely handled,' but she was much too eager to hear what he had to tell even to pretend to be cross. So he went on and said, 'You must get your father, or me either, to show you, on that big map he has got, two little words in that part of it which shows the wood on the hill over against the church, where the path across the fields from the Folly Hill goes down into the pasture by the old moated mound. The two words that I mean are DWARF'S

WELL. And that is where I have got my beard greener than ever, and my nose such a pearly white. Oh, I HAV' been searching about there! There's no wonder I have got greener-bearded and whiter-nosed than ever! And even if I told you what I have been looking for, and what I have found, you would hardly be ready to believe—at least just yet. Though, to be sure, you have seen that “Mr Sit-in-the-chair” has fallen in with something just a little out of the common. Hasn't he, now?

Miss Mary was so full of wondering curiosity, and was really so much surprised over the things she had already seen, that she did not say a single word to all the old gentleman's banter and chaff except only 'Please go on, please tell me.'

So he went on, and said, ' Perhaps the best way will be to tell you at least a little of what happened to me after I sat down in that remarkable chair the other day ; and then, when I come to the right part of my tale, you will see why I have been searching and seeking and grubbing about like a mole in its dark runs or a rabbit in its burrow ' And then he proceeded to tell his story much as follows here

4 not sat down, as well as I could judge,
" a few seconds, when I suddenly
" of a sound sleep, and I could
" ere I was. But certainly it was
" the place where I was when I sat
" and as if I was all in the room.

Belt I saw, and the Lord Chamberlain even asked Orion to draw his sword out, just a little bit, to show me. Only he covered my eyes with his cambric frill first, lest I should be blinded with the bright-



'We popped out of a sort of trap-door'

ness. And after that he showed me several of the other stars we know by their names down here, you know, Mary. Oh! and I must not forget one other thing I saw. He showed me two or three comets that were kept fastened up, to be ready

about our little ways and customs. But all of us, all we fairies, and the dear Princess most of all, have an enemy ; a very dangerous enemy he is too, because he's so crafty and sly, and such a terrible clever worker, besides being as cruel and malicious as ever he can be. And we know that he is plotting against us all, and the Fairy Realm, at this very time ; and if his plots go much farther, and we can't succeed in frustrating them, we shall have to flit from this part altogether, or else be destroyed with a great destruction. But if we went away from the place, we should never see little Miss Mary again, hardly even so much as in a passing glance from the kingfisher-chariot. However, things are not as bad as that yet ; and the Princess and her wisest councillors think that very likely you might be able to help her in one particular way."

Well, Mr. Greenbeard could not the least understand this, and said so. How could a weak, creeping mortal help such a bright, lightsome, and yet, at the same time, so able and powerful a being as a Fairy, and especially a Fairy Princess, by anything he could do ? He only wished he could, wished it with all his heart and mind, and all willingness and earnest desire.

The Fairy Lord told him it might be possible ; that very likely he and Miss Mary together might be able to be very helpful. And then he went on to remind Mr. Greenbeard of what he was sure the

old gentleman knew as well as he did himself, and that was that the worst and cruellest and most mischief-working enemies the Fairies had were the people called the Dwarfs.

Yes, Mr. Greenbeard knew this well, and could have told many tales—only he knew the Fairy Lord must have known the truth of them much better than he did—about the cruel tricks and persecutions and harryings the dwarfs had practised on the fairies, wherever they were strong enough and had the opportunity. Sometimes even they had hunted the poor fairies, and when they had caught them they handed them over to their children to tease and worry and torment, just like cruel and unfeeling mortal children with flies and butterflies, and bees even, when cruel, brutal boys—sometimes grown-up people—had pulled out their stings, and perhaps stuck pins through them, or cockchafers treated even more cruelly than that. So he didn't say anything except that he knew it was so, and that he was so very sorry to hear that the Princess and her folk could even have reason to fancy themselves in any danger that way—for he could not help thinking this might be what the Lord Chamberlain meant. And if only he could help—but, oh dear! how could that possibly be?

But then the old Fairy Lord went on to say, 'Well, the enemy dwarf dwelt in a cave-home on the bank over against the church, and the entrance to the cave

was so cunningly contrived that no one could find it out, and the fairies did not venture to go there themselves, because he would be sure to detect their presence and chase them, and perhaps catch some of them, and they had no protection or defence against him; and besides, even if they did succeed in discovering exactly where he lived and how he got in and out, they could not, with their merely fairy power, do anything effectual against him. But perhaps—nay, much more than “perhaps”—a Christian mortal might, with such aid as their fairy means could give him.’ And then the Chamberlain entered into long consultation and considerings with Mr. Greenbeard, telling him a good deal about what the Princess and her Councillors thought might be plans to be laid and things to be done.

But the plan which commended itself most to the Councillors who had been laying their heads together, depended principally on getting possession of a particular substance or matter. It was quite well known in the Fairy World that mortals said that, if any one could succeed in obtaining fern-seed, he would be enabled to walk invisible—invisible, however, only to mortal eyes, not to fairies’ eyes, and less still to dwarfs’ eyes. But, in the present case, what was wanted was something powerful enough to make even mortals, with their heavy gross bodies, so bad to see that the sharp-eyed dwarf himself might not be able to discern them.

Now the Princess and one of her oldest Counsellors remembered hearing a story from quite a venerable fairy that was connected with the days when the fish used to walk in the fields, and big lizards and crocodiles used to fly, and the salamanders ate up the hot embers after breakfast had been cooked, and when, in consequence of the great quantity of food consumed by the giants, and needed by the great numbers of fairies and elves and wood-nymphs and water-sprites—who all required enough to eat, of course—it became very hard to catch the wild creatures and things that were good for food; and the fairy host and their rulers had to think a good deal about providing the food that was wanted. Well, at that time—the giants being more troubled still about the same matter, and finding not only boys and girls getting scarce, but the deer and wild cattle, and goats and hares and rabbits all scuttling away the very moment they heard the giants' lumbering tread, and much more saw their towering big heads looming over the tree-tops—they held a great Council. And the oldest among them, who was old enough to have begun growing the other way long before, becoming more and more wrinkled, till his face had got to be worse than a withered walnut, and his shoulders had sunk down to his waist, and his knees got lost in his old long boots, got up at last and stood on his seat, and told them how he had heard, long before any of the rest of them were

born, that up above the sky-floor, where the stars were set (each running on its own proper wheels, as we know), there was a substance to be had which was a hundred times finer than the powder of a dry puff-ball—fine enough, indeed, when com-



Looming over the tree tops

pared to fern-seed, to put one in mind of mustard-seed placed side by side with cannon-balls; and that the quality of that substance was such that, if any one could only get the tiniest pinch of it, it made him invisible, and besides that, such that he could be no more heard than seen. So they

greedy old scarecrow had pocketed—it was in that way really that they formed a notion of how the accident had befallen; but they never could find a bit as big as a pea belonging to the old greedy one's carcase. He was gone; had disappeared totally. And after wondering over that for a few days, at last one of the least stupid among them said he was sure he could explain all about his total disappearance. The reason no part of him could be found was that he actually had secured the powder of invisibility, and consequently neither could he himself be seen, nor any particle of anything that had belonged to him.

But the Princess, who knew more than many of the fairies themselves suspected—and no wonder; for she knew all the secrets of all the queens and other powers among the fairies ever since there had been any,—was not only sure that there had been such a substance, and that the giants had really gone to quite the right place for it—which was the main thing in her mind—but also that it must be there still; because she knew what nobody else knew, namely, what it really was.

Now I am sure nobody will ever guess, not even if he begins now and goes on till some-time-come-never, what that secret was. So I must tell you outright and quite plainly.

We all know as well as possible that there never is, and never can be, a new moon till the old one is

totally used up. And we know too that when the old one is just used up, there is about sure to be just the lightest, slightest, tiniest, shadowiest, un-touchablest atom of the dust of the old one, just as the light of the new moon is going to dart into its place; and that such atoms must be as dark as dark can be, just the very opposite of the light of bright moonshine, and of course such darkness as that is the very grandmother of darkness. But there being so very many moons to be changed, one after the other, these tiny, tiny atoms would, after many hundreds and thousands of years, make more than only just a pinch, more than several pinches perhaps; and all they had to do would be to find out the place where the new moon popped into the just vacated place of the old one.

And that was what the Lord Chamberlain of the Fairy Court and Mr. Greenbeard had gone darting up for, like a shooting-star going the wrong way, up and still up, to the very place where the stars were set.

Well, the wheel-tracks of the stars could all be seen, and after a bit of looking the tracks of the moon were found too, and the Fairy Lord followed them quite easily, though Mr. Greenbeard could hardly see anything at all that seemed like a mark of any kind. Presently my Lord Chamberlain stretched his wand out with the brilliant end downwards, and whispered to the old gentleman, 'There

it is!' Mr. Greenbeard saw a little tiny heap, but he could not have seen it at all without the help of the Chamberlain's wand; which tiny heap was the dust and ashes of thousands and thousands of decayed and worn-out old moons. But what was to be done next he did not know the least.

But the Fairy Lord knew: for he had got that wonderful little screw-tube I told you of, all ready, strange living-snake chain and all; and he was not long in getting it filled, and screwing the top on, and hanging it round Mr. Greenbeard's neck with the tube-case in his secret pocket. For, if there hadn't been such a thing as that to put it in, and keep it in also, poor Mr. Greenbeard would never have been seen by anybody, not even a dwarf, if he had got but the hundredth part of a pinch about him.

Well, they went down from the star-vault more slowly and observingly than when they went up. And once Mr. Greenbeard found their conveyance right in the thick of shooting-stars—so thick they were he was almost afraid some of them might shoot up against their car. All sorts of colours, and all sorts of sizes, and all sorts of brightnesses, some shooting one way and some shooting another, but almost all with a general downward direction. Presently Mr. Greenbeard and his companion reached the place at which all began to turn quite downward. Then my Lord stopped the car for a few

minutes, and began to talk very earnestly with the old gentleman, at the same time giving him the ring which, when it was turned round on the finger, produced the remarkable results we have before noticed.

Now, what the Fairy Chamberlain had to say was mostly as follows. — That the mischief-working Dwarf who dwelt near the Dwarf's Well had got all the moudiwarps and all the mole-crickets in the whole country-side together, and had set them all boring galleries and tunnels from somewhere near his dwelling-place towards the fairy bowers, which, as we know, were near and under the Folly Hill, and all round and down towards the garden fountain, that the works were going on as fast as they could be pushed forward, and no one suspecting it except the Princess and a few of her oldest and most experienced Councillors — the blind mortals on the surface merely remarking to one another 'What a mess the moudiwarps were making in the fields about'; that when the mines and galleries were made big enough, and completed, the Dwarf meant to make the whole place a snare and a destruction, it was not known how, to the fairy race; and that he was such a terribly clever plotter and skilful worker, they did not know, and could not even guess, what he really was up to. Therefore they wished above everything to find out what it was that he was planning, and

then to try and counterplot, and perhaps circumvent him. And it was thought by the Fairy Council that Mr. Greenbeard and his little friend, Miss Mary, might most likely be able to help their Fairy friend in the matter. After that, the Lord Chancellor had gone on to mention some things which he thought the old gentleman might easily try to manage; and when this talk was over and over, Mr. Greenbeard found himself just waking out of a pleasant snooze, with a dream in it, in the pleasant chair the Princess had caused him to sit down in.

When we remember how remarkably green the old man's beard had become, and his nose like pearly white, and the explanation he had given to Miss Mary as to how all that had come to pass, we are quite ready to be told that he hadn't been idle or asleep all the time, or even the most of the time, since the day of the garden-party. The truth is, he had been very busy and very wide-awake indeed; and he had found, before very long, that it was a good thing indeed that he had got the germ of utter darkness, for that else the Dwarf would have caught him at once. He supposed the little chap must have smelt him, or his blood (as it was known the club-witted old giants could), for he was always sniffing about; because, you see, the stic substance or powder he had in that little bottle had two different qualities or virtues: one was

Greenbeard (or any one else who saw him) unseen by the Dwarf as well as the other to enable the Dwarf as well as the fairies and the other of that sort. And so he soon became familiar with the Dwarf's personal

Greenbeard wasn't very likely not to know him the first time. Any other time, he happened to meet him. His head was as big as a large bundle of clothes, and he was always up tight ready to go to the wash, and always so. For one thing, his nose wasn't straight, and stuck out sideways, and then it didn't match, and weren't set exactly even. His arms were longer than his legs, and his feet were ever so far beneath his knees; and his sides being short, were thin and bandy, and in big flat ducks' feet. But MY! he did look sharp and sharp—sharp enough almost to split the edge of a razor! Besides, he had a way when it came to walking faster than usual of holding up one of his arms over his head instead of an umbrella, which made him look more than rather odd, you will be sure without my telling you so.

But Mr. Greenbeard had contrived to get knowledge of a good deal besides the look of the Dwarf. He had mastered several of his little ways and tricks, and some of his secrets too. The first time he had got inside the Dwarf's dwelling—and he

the Lord High Chamberlain, and the rest of the Fairy Court ; and there were many of the pages and other attendants, down to the gate-keepers at the Arched Entrance

And another set of things set him wondering and thinking whatever they could be, or be meant for. They were full of springs and catches and little wheels, all as intricate and full of uncanny contrivance as could be, and the old gentleman, never having seen or fancied anything of the sort before, was strangely puzzled and perplexed.

However, one day as he was looking all about—he was always very careful not to touch anything or displace it ever so little—the ugly duckling of a dwarf came suddenly in, and for a minute or two Mr. Greenbeard did not feel altogether at his ease. But besides sniffing about a little, just as if he wondered where 'the smell of an Englishman' came from, he took no further notice, and the old gentleman saw him set to work making another of those strange contrivances he had before noticed ; and when he had finished it he seemed to want to try it, and see if it would work properly. And then it became clear to Mr. Greenbeard that it was a trap or gin, so clever and so fine that it could not be seen when it was set, and that nothing once caught in it could ever get out. Next the Dwarf caught up one of the fairy effigies, and made it go gently along till it got into the trap. And then, didn't he laugh a

than dynamite, and as manageable as a tricycle or a baby's perambulator; and he was going to place it



And then he danced about

all about, the minute the mines and galleries were ready, and his traps all set to catch the fairies as they tried to escape from their ruined home.

Mr. Greenbeard did not allow himself much time

for sleep that night. He had a deal to think about, and a deal to talk about with the Lord Chamberlain and other great fairies, and a deal to plan so as to stop all this plotted spite and mischief. But the thing that puzzled him most still was the padded shutters. He did not trouble over the traps very much. All he cared about them was that he got a very good notion, or 'wrinkle,' out of them. For he made the Lord Chamberlain get the fairy work-people that made those wonderful elevators we heard of, and those cars and carriages that were drawn through the air by peacocks and kingfishers, and so on, and set them all to work on making moudiwarp traps and molecricquet gins, and I hardly need tell you more than that as to what they were meant for. But he couldn't—think and try and puzzle his brains as he would—he COULDN'T think what those shutters were for.

All at once, however, his beard grew quite sea-green, and his nose became a rosy purple, and his arms went waving about like the sails of a tipsy windmill, and he danced and jumped so vigorously that he hurt his pet corn so badly he couldn't go on any longer. And all this crazy fit came on because he felt sure he had guessed right at last, and found out all about the shutters, and how Miss Mary could be, and would be, of help in stopping the wicked ways and crafty tricks of old Duckfoot.

Well, he laid his plans accordingly, and one fine

morning, when the tunnel was within a few feet of where it was meant to end, all the fairy-made traps were laid just before the moudiwarps and crickets were to be set to their special work for the day—for Mr Greenbeard had found out quite certainly that the Dwarf always came as regular as clockwork to start them every morning, and to give the particular orders for the work to be done to the different heads of the gangs—well, that morning he watched the old fellow off on his errand himself, and gave him time to get there and just see his workers getting caught one after the other, and he was sure that Mr Dwarf would then have his hands far too full to be able to make any very great haste to get back home. And then he set to, himself, did Mr. Greenbeard, at the Dwarf's dwelling, found out old Duckfoot's store of Astral Fulminator—I believe that was the name of his pet explosive; applied it in due form to the shutters, ready to go off at a second's notice, and waited for the hasty return of the Dwarf, which he knew would be quick enough the moment he sent a shrill whistle down one particular tunnel or tube made by the head molecricquet on purpose to send messages along.

And where do you think Miss Mary was? And what do you think it was her especial duty to do? Mr. Greenbeard had left it to her to get the bell-ringers all together in the belfry, and then to watch for a white flag which he had fastened to a long pole

ready, quite close to the Dwarf's Well, and the moment she saw that raised up above the trees, she was to call the order to the ringers, who were all to have their hands on the bell-ropes waiting for the word, to ring and RING and RING as if they meant to ring the tower down or the people up to a fire in the village. Because the old gentleman knew that dwarfs cannot abide the sound of church-bells; that enough of it makes them burst; and that if they be set to ring and kept ringing by the help of a Christian Lassie there is really no help for them.

Well, the old gentleman sent his whistle, and the old Dwarf knew that matters were at a pretty pass at his house if that came to happen, and so he came pounding and flapping along with his duck-feet as if destruction were behind him instead of before him. The moment Mr. Greenbeard saw he was close enough he sprung his mine, the shutters were all smashed into powder as fine as smoke, and the bells the very same second struck up such a peal as never had been imagined before.

Poor old Duckfoot! It was all up with him! He burst up in a twinkling, and the pieces he flew into were still smaller than the powder of the padded shutters.

As to the fairies and their thanks to Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary, and the grand entertainment in their honour, and all that, I must

tell you another time. All the rest that I can tell you now is that Miss Mary scuttled the ringers off to their homes with ever so much money each to hold their tongues, and get indoors like rabbits into



With ever so much money each

their holes when a dog comes to visit them, while she waited at the door till somebody came very hot and out of breath, with a black coat on and gray trousers, and asked what the bells were ringing for? And all she said was, 'Please, we were waiting for service, and were afraid you had forget', and then

reedy, quite close to the Dwarf's Well, and the moment she saw that raised up above the trees, she was to call the order to the ringers, who were all to have their hands on the bell-ropes waiting for the word, to ring and RING and RING as if they meant to ring the tower down or the people up to a fire in the village. Because the old gentleman knew that dwarfs cannot abide the sound of church-bells; that enough of it makes them burst; and that if they be set to ring and kept ringing by the help of a Christian Lassie there is really no help for them.

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Waiting at the money cart

when a dog comes to visit them, while at the door I'll suddenly come very low, with a black coat on and ask what the bell's were ring- and say, 'Please, we were w- ere afraid you had forgot'

she skipped off into the Fairy Princess's car which was waiting for her, with the kingfishers ready to start, and was at home and fast asleep just before tea, when suddenly somebody woke her up out of dreaming sleep.



VI

GALA DOINGS IN 'FAIRYLAND,' AND MISS MARY'S PARTICIPATION THEREIN

IT happened one day, not very long after the confusion of the Dwarf's evil plans and the destruction which fell upon himself, that Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary were sitting together, after a ramble in the woods by the river, in the flower-garden, and at no great distance from the Fountain and its stone basin. They had been talking of many things, and not least of all about the Fairies, and their own gladness that the good little folks were now, at all events, free for good from any fear of further persecution from the wretched malice of their late evil-willy enemy. The old gentleman had just been saying that he had a notion that the Fairies were very busy over something, and that it

was by no means certain that they were only occupied about making good the damage and mischief done by the *moundwarps* and *mole-crickets*, but that there was something else quite different from that which was now upon their minds and hands: he really 'wondered what it was they were thinking about and working at,' he said. Miss Mary, however, did not seem to believe that there was anything very particular going on among them; or that, if there was, Mr. Greenbeard was so very likely to know anything about it; or, at least, to be the first to know it. Besides, she added, 'she could see without looking twice that his beard was not nearly so green as it had been, and his nose was about its usual colour again; so that she knew he had not been at any of his poking and prying, and searching and spying tricks lately.'

But Mr. Greenbeard only laughed at this, and told her she did not know everything, and far less hear everything, although it might very well happen that there *were* things for her to hear, if only she had not been, as usual, putting so much cotton-wool in her ears.

'She hadn't been putting cotton-wool in her ears,' she protested; 'and it was a pity he didn't know better than to tell such stories. Her poor little dolls at home were taught better than that, and behaved better too.'

But Mr. Greenbeard only said to her, 'Well,

Mary, if your ears had not been stopped in some way or other—if not with cotton-wool, yet with something that served the same purpose—you would have heard the sound that I hear; that I hear as plainly as I hear you, and that seems to come from just close to, or perhaps almost from underneath, that great thick green tree just opposite to us—the one you say you can never find any birds' nests in, although it looks just like the fittingest place for birds to build their nests in. There! Don't you hear it now?

'I only hear the bees buzzing, and one might think they were in your bonnet, you are so silly about it,' said Miss Mary.

'But where are the bees to make it, then?' asked Mr. Greenbeard. 'I don't see any bees near, nor yet any flowers anywhere near the place the sound seems to come from.'

Well, Miss Mary had to admit that there were neither flowers nor bee-hives, nor any appearance of a single bee, and much more of a number of bees such as to produce the noise they heard. For there was no doubt about the sound, and no more doubt that it really was a buzzing sort of noise.

'And it is just that that I have heard, have indeed been listening to, ever since we came and quietly sat down here. I should say now—that is, if you are quite certain, Mary, that there are no bees near, and no flowers, and no hives——'

‘Of course there are no bees,’ broke in the young lady, ‘and nothing else, except that queer buzzy noise. How I wonder what it is! And I do wish you weren’t so silly about it.’

‘Well,’ Mr. Greenbeard began again—‘well, I was going to say, if you had not interrupted me so very politely, that I think it must be the Fairies we hear.’

‘Psha!’ said Miss Mary.

‘But I mean it,’ pursued Mr. Greenbeard.

‘Psha!’ said Miss Mary again. ‘There aren’t any fairies.’

Mr. Greenbeard, however, thought there were; and that it was the noise made by fairy workmen which they heard, both of them, so plainly.

‘Psha!’ said Miss Mary, for the third time. ‘It is nothing but a buzzy noise, that anything could make. I could, if I tried.’

But Mr. Greenbeard did not seem the least put out or annoyed that she should show herself so “contrary.” He only showed her something—indeed it was only the least little bit of something—he had in his pocket. But that “little bit of something” made her forget all about his being either silly or stupid. And it made her equally anxious to see more of it, and to find out whatever it actually was.

‘Oh!’ said the old gentleman, ‘it is nothing much. At the most, it is only something silly; something very stupid indeed.’

'Oh' please show it me Please let me see I won't call you stupid and silly any more'

'Are you quite sure of that?' asked her old friend. 'Because I shall be obliged to say over again just what you think so very silly. For I really think—I really do think—that buzzy noise is made by the fairy workmen, who are very busy over some strange piece of work they have got in hand Don't you remember, Mary, that, now I have got a certain ring and a certain chain, and a certain little delicate tube with a screw-top to it, I may perhaps be able to see and even to hear more than you can? Even to see and hear things which aren't altogether plain either to your eyes or ears?'

'Oh! but can you see anything now, anything more than I can?' she asked quite anxiously. 'Do please tell me what it is.'

'I very soon could,' he answered, 'if only I took the right way to do so. Only, there is one thing against that, and that is, that though the kind Fairy Princess is not at all content that you should not be able to see too, and as much and as well as I can see, yet, how can you—who don't believe, as you said only just now, that there are any fairies at all,—how can you expect to see what I can, with the help of my ring and my little tube, which, as you have heard from me, contains that very wonderful substance which both makes the people that have it

invisible to everybody and everything, and also able to see all sorts and manners of otherwise invisible persons and things?'

Miss Mary thought there might be—surely there *MUST* be—some way for her to be made able to see too, just as she had been enabled to see the *Fairies* and all their doings more than once before. Did not Mr. Greenbeard think so too? Mr. Greenbeard smiled a little to himself at her saying now that she had seen the beings which she had a little while before said there were none of; but he took no other notice of her change of mind on that head, except in the way of saying that he certainly had thought so once, and so had the Fairy Princess too. But, if there really were no fairies, how could it be?

All at once Miss Mary burst out with 'Oh, please, don't be a tiresome tease! I am sure there is, and I am sure you know it. And I am sure the Princess herself has found out the way. Yes. Yes. YES. And I feel almost sure that that strange bright thing you have got in your pocket has got something to do with it. Now, hasn't it?'

The old gentleman was not able to say it had not; but what he did say disappointed Miss Mary more than if he had said so outright. For what he actually said was—

'It is your ring, Mary.

Her ring, indeed! And she had seen enough of

it to be quite sure it was far too big to be even a bracelet small enough to fit her !

'But don't you want to see it?' asked Mr. Greenbeard, when she had never said a word at all for at least two minutes.

'Psha!' said Miss Mary.

So Mr. Greenbeard drew the bright, beautiful thing out of his pocket, so glorious in its brilliancy and so perfect in its workmanship. But—wonder upon wonder—as he drew it out it began to expand, and, by the time he had got it quite forth, it was as big as a boy's hoop! And the stone in it! Oh! it just dazzled Miss Mary's eyes so that she blinked outright.

'There, Mary, what do you think of your "half-hoop" ring?' asked the old man; 'or perhaps you would like to call it a whole hoop?'

But Miss Mary could not even say 'Psha!' now, her eyes had opened so wide, and her mouth wider still. She could only look and gaze in a bewildered wonder.

'But won't you try it on?' presently asked her companion; 'perhaps it is not such a misfit as you think.' And he put it over her head. But in a second of time it began to shrink visibly; and in less than a minute it wasn't half the size it had been at first! But Mr. Greenbeard did not wish it to become a necklet, nor even a waist-band. So he removed it from over her head, and placed it before her

so that she could thrust her hand and arm through. But neither did he want it to become a bracelet—for the Princess had told him all about its nature and qualities when she gave it to him for Miss Mary; and that it would take any size it was wanted to be—he only wanted it to be a ring: a ring to fit her finger, and to be as useful to her, and in just the same way as his own was to him. So he made her put just her finger through, and hold it so till the beautiful circlet rested in its right place and fitted her exactly, as if it had been made on purpose to fit that particularly pretty little finger of hers.

And then she had time to see that it was just such another as Mr. Greenbeard's, only smaller so as to suit her.

The next thing was for her to get to know how to use it properly. It seemed such an easy thing to do only to turn it half round on her finger. And yet it wasn't quite so easy, or half so easy, indeed, as it looked. For it not only had to be turned half round—just *exactly half round*: it had to be turned round in one direction only; and besides that, it had to be turned with the wearer looking in one direction only—he must be looking directly towards the sun, and must turn the ring in the same direction as the sun always goes in himself.

Well, the old gentleman turned his ring, and Miss Mary turned hers, getting it quite right at last after several tries; and she saw the snake-chain

round her old friend's neck, only ten times as bright and ten times as living as ever before, when she had had no ring on ; and the jewelled backs of the snakes and their brilliant eyes seemed to glitter and flash and blaze so as to lighten up everything near. And then she saw the old man unscrew the top of the little case or tube, and take a little glancing needle-like object from the side of it, and put it just inside the tube, and afterwards lightly touch his right eyelid with it, doing exactly the same to her a moment afterwards ; though the brightness that came quite close to her eyes made her shut them tight and feel as if the water came into them. But as soon as ever she got her sight clear and steady again, he said to her—

'Now, Mary, look back to the place where you heard the buzzing. But mind you don't call out or scream !'

But I don't think Miss Mary could have screamed or called out either, if she had wanted ever so. She was far too much amazed, and delighted as well. For there was such a grand portal opened there, and all the buzzing, as she had called it while listening to it, had in truth and reality been caused by hosts of fairy workers getting it ready, and garnishing it and the corridors within with fairy decorations, and by hosts of other fairies in their brightest and wonderfullest and most gorgeous array. People talk about "all the colours of the rainbow,"

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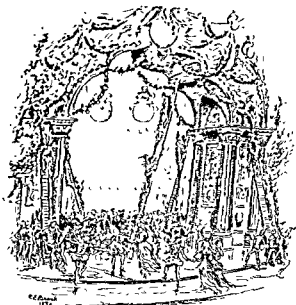
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and the brilliancy of the hues of the diamond, and the glories of the peacock's train, and the marvellous beauties of the butterflies' plumage, and so on; and about the golden rays of the sun, and the glories of



Such a grand portal,

a great display of the Northern Streamers, and the effulgence of a stream of meteors, and the heavenly beauty of the clouds in attendance on a gorgeous sunset, painted as only things of heaven can be painted: but the fairies' clothing, and their state

robes, and their garniture of jewels, and their own non-earthly, unstained, undimmed, unworn loveliness—Oh! I can't tell you about it. No dream of Mary's had ever attained to a conception of a tenth part of it before.

And the portal seemed so large and lofty and imposing! Everything—the Fairies themselves, the great gates, the corridors and galleries and arcades within, all seemed six times as great as when Mary and her companion had last been among the fairy host. She could not the least understand it, or any part of it.

But she was far worse puzzled and perplexed about another thing, namely, where it was that she now found herself. She was sure that but a moment or two before she had been sitting quietly talking with Mr. Greenbeard, quite close to the Fountain, and that it was but a second or two since she had looked, as she had been told, towards the foot of the great ever-green tree below which she had thought she heard the singular buzzing noise. But there was no Fountain now anywhere within sight, no tree, no sound such as her ears had testified to before, but a totally new and totally different scene, a new place, new surroundings, everything new, and everything strange, lovely, glorious, unimaginable in newness and beauty. If it was all a dream, Mary wished such dreams came a little oftener.

And, in truth, she had not half recovered herself when six fairies came to her, all of them

clothed in something that looked as if it was times more beautiful than the loveliest and costliest silk, and such as to set Mary thinking that if people could be turned into fibres finer than gossamer, spun into the delicatest floss, and woven into a fabric such as could be wrought so, these fairy dresses must have come from such a loom. But it was not only their dresses. Among them they had a dress for Miss Mary—a special dress, a presentation dress sent her by the dear Princess herself; such and so beautiful that it took her breath away, almost, only to see it! And she had not to grow any smaller than her own proper size for it to fit her—altogether different from what it had been before, when she and Mr. Greenbeard had grown so little they were not taller than either of them, a quarter of a yard high. And another thing—the dress went on of itself. There was no trouble at all with the dressing as usual. And the pretty shoes that were sent! Cinderella's glass slippers were as nothing compared with them. And when the six fairies had finished dressing her—and it was all done in a twinkling, as you will suppose from what I have already said—two pages came with the crushed sunbeams that had been sent for, as you will remember, when Mr. Greenbeard went up with the Fairy Chamberlain to the star-canopy; that time he sat down in the wonderful chair; and they sprinkled it over her head till her hair sparkled and glowed and shone fit to dazzle any one's eyes.

And then, as soon as she was ready—Mr Greenbeard too, I should say, had been put in the same expeditious way into Fairy court-dress, such material and such colour, and such fashion as mere mortals know nothing of,—as soon as she was ready, the chief of the six pearly-dressed fairies told her all about where she was, and why she was there, and everything. She was the Princess's own special guest, and there was a great entertainment in her honour, and because her great friend, Mr Greenbeard had contrived so as to master the wicked, mischievous meaning old Dwarf, and relieved the Fairy Realm from a great danger and source of trouble. And to make it all the more distinguished, all the fairies had assumed their fullest size as well as put on their most magnificent array. Mary was a little puzzled, however, about the fairies "putting on their fullest size"—at least, at first. But presently she recollected that she had seen many pictures of fairies and elves and all such-like beings, some of them resting in the cup or blooms of beautiful, but quite common flowers, sometimes borne through the air on gorgeously winged dragon-flies, sometimes sitting at table round an object growing out of the ground no larger than a big mushroom; sometimes playing and toying with jewelled humming-birds which, tiny as they were, still hardly seemed less than themselves. And then she remembered besides that the Queen of the Fairies had been described, or pictures of her had

been drawn, as being like a delicate young girl of smallish stature, not the least like a child though, but graceful and queenly as well as young, and that all her court were round her, and quite suitable in size and stature. And so, after the first minute or two, Miss Mary easily understood that this time the Princess and the Lord Chamberlain, and the Courtiers, and all the lords and ladies and chief officers of the Fairy Realm, were all to be seen by her as having figures and shapes and growth as great as her own, and even, perhaps, a little bit larger; and consequently she was not the least surprised when in a minute or two more she found herself in the presence of the Princess, and discovered that she was a full head taller than herself.

It is no use my trying to tell you what the Princess wore, or how wonderfully beautiful she was, or how everything looked brighter and better and happier and lovelier from her simple presence in the midst. But I can tell you that she wore her fairy coronet. It was made of wrought golden sunbeams with veiny flashes of summer lightning intermingled, and the jewels upon it and about it were pearls and diamonds as big as doves' eggs, glittering and flashing, not in rivalry, but in the glory with glory with each other. And all the rest of the time was such as to match such an other-worldly adornment as that!

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val'd of heaven, with all its jewellery of glittering, glancing gleaming stars came down so near the earth surface that a venturesome kite might almost hope to reach it. It seemed to open out with a wide, lofty open arched portal at one end, and in an immeasurably short space of time all the Ladies, with all the *officers* of the Court, each with his splendid topped wand, formed a procession and began to go forth, the Princess at the head, leading Miss Mary by the hand. They moved forth into a park, such that Mary had never even fancied anything like it, although she had seen the trees of the *fairy world before*, and remembered with a lively recollection their fruits and their flowers, and branches and boughs, and their tops reaching almost up to heaven.

But it was not the trees that she looked at the most, nor the fruits of so many forms and colours, and so many various sorts. It was the creatures there were everywhere that made her gaze and wonder and feel a great love for them, they were so trusting, loving, and lovely. I cannot tell you about all of them, or perhaps even many of them. But first, there was a company, many companies rather, of squirrels, with such soft, lustrous dark eyes, such glossy, russet backs and sides, such well-furred yet bushy tails, and such lithe activity in every limb. And they came on and on to the feet of the Princess. And then they skipped up

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The palace they were in was glorious

vault of heaven, with all its jewellery of glistening, glancing, gleaming stars, came down so near the earth surface that a venturesome kite might almost hope to reach it. It seemed to open out with a wide, lofty, open arched portal at one end, and in an incomprehensibly short space of time all the ladies with all the officers of the Court, each with his splendour-tipped wand formed a procession and began to go forth the Princess at the head, leading Miss Mary by the hand. They moved forth into a park, such that Mary had never even fancied anything like it, although she had seen the trees of the fairy world before, and remembered with a lively recollection their fruits and their flowers, and branches and boughs, and their tops reaching almost up to heaven.

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in

into the trees on either side by hundreds and hundreds, and swung themselves into lines and festoons, and intertwining systems of network, all of them still continuing to shift their individual



The ivy-arches.

places so that there was, so to speak, a living, moving species of tracery all across the grand avenue the fairy procession was continuously passing along.

Then came companies on companies, troops upon troops, hosts upon hosts, of birds, all the

most gloriously plumaged birds you can imagine—kingfishers, bluebirds, humming-birds of every gem-like family and kind, golden orioles, rose-coloured pastors, grass-birds, parrakeets, all the most gorgeous birds in creation—you could not have fancied there were half so many gloriously coloured birds in the world! And they formed themselves into a carpet for the Princess to walk upon; only, as she and the other fairies—and even the little mortal visitor, Mary—set their feet as if to tread upon the marvellous carpet, the birds shifted their places, and the steps were actually taken on something that seemed like velvet of unimaginable softness and depth. But still the carpet of bird-plumage was before them, and the pattern shifting every moment as the birds which composed it shifted their places in that strange manner of advance.

Next came the singing-birds, and filled all the trees above and around; and all began to sing, and you could see their little throats swelling and working, and each trying, as it seemed, to sing more sweetly than all its companions, or ever before in its little life; and for all there were so many there was not one note that could have been spared, nor one that was not as sweet as the nightingale's sweetest, the blackbird's richest, the thrush's gladdest. And then, high up in the welkin, far above all the other birds, when a great silence had suddenly fallen, the host of the skylarks and

woodlarks were heard all joining in one great swelling and equally harmonious and melodious symphony

After the Concert, such as this wonderful orchestra made it, came a moving host, a gently sweeping array of downy pinions. A thousand swans, all pure white, all with the softest plumage, took the whole fairy assemblage up upon their down-covered backs and bore them swiftly, but oh! so softly—the Princess's stately bearer, as large as five ordinary swans, and with golden pinions, leading the way—over a great, shining, glorious lake, which was pellucid water above, but seemed to have a wavering deepness and volume of many-coloured flame below, such a sight as had never entered into little Mary's head to conceive before: and as they floated along evenly and swiftly over this magic surface, they saw thousands of bright moving objects filling the air all round them and above them, all luminous like fireflies, of all hues and tints and colours, too glorious and too gorgeous for me to attempt to describe them; and on the other verge of the great water-sheet thousands and thousands of like luminous objects that might have been glow-worms, only the light they gave was not all golden like that of the glow-worm of mortal occurrence. There were thousands of varied colours among them.

Once at the other side, the swans glided softly and gently, so that Mary did not know how it was

done, down to the surface at the edge of the water, and as the living burden each bird had borne stepped to the shore, the bearer sank in the water and withdrew so that the next could come close and speedily, without trouble or confusion, the whole procession formed again and began to advance in an orderly flow.

But this was the signal for all the luminous objects in the air, and for those stationary on the verge of the lake, to move in a remarkable, uncontradicted, harmonious manner, and Miss Mary's party were fairly amazed at seeing a great majestic arch begin to frame itself, and go on framing itself, the ground upwards, complete ; fashioning itself of the component parts consisting of objects brighter, clearer, more luminous a hundred times than any lamps at any grand everyday illumination had ever seen or heard of—with all the brightest, brilliant, or softer and milder lights all arranged so lovelily and harmoniously as the tints and colours of the rainbow. And high up above the arch, where letters formed with living opals, there was seen within a border of solid sunshine a legend or motto—*'WELCOME TO THE FAIRIES' FRIENDS.'* Mary could not believe her eyes, and still less her ears, when the Fairy Princess said to her : 'because you helped in delivering us from the Dwarf who hated us.'

But neither the entertainment nor the

were over yet. For the Arch of Welcome—and it was really an Arch of Triumph too—was only the entrance to the real Illumination. And such an illumination as it was! You would never fancy what it was like, or how it was contrived and managed.

But you remember about the shooting stars Mr. Greenbeard found himself among that time his hair grew downwards into his head, because of his mounting up so fast and so far, as he was going up to the star-canopy on high? And how he was more than half afraid some of them in their rapid transit might possibly dash up against the car he was in? Well, what the fairies that were borne in those brilliant fleeting things were occupied about was catching and holding fast on to the flashes of lightning—the very brightest and vividest of all—after all the terrible mischief and power had gone out of them, their brilliantness, however, and all their splendour of light and colour being still at the brightest. As the flashes were captured, one after another, they were compressed and stored in properly prepared capsules, and despatched to the Department of Lightness in Fairy Realm. Others of the shooting stars and their occupants—but these were the slower ones of bluer colour and greater apparent size—were charged with bottling the thunder which had been half stifled and choked back by the capture of the lightning, and this was packed in what looked like great carboys or drums.

Perhaps I ought to say that some of the lightning was dealt with in one way, and some in another. But much of it was reduced to the very finest, mistiest powder—just as the sunbeams we have already heard of, that were shed on Miss Mary's head, had been—and it was called Levigated Lightning.

I have given this little bit of explanation, because it helps us to understand how the Illuminations in Fairy Realm outshine by a hundred times all the Illuminations ever heard of in mortal lands. Jubilee Illuminations, and German-Emperor-visit Illuminations, and Illuminations at Rome, or in Paris or Russia, and at all the Exhibitions there ever were, all of them, were as pale as candles and lamps in the full sunshine of midsummer day, in the face of the Fairy Illumination Miss Mary and Mr Greenbeard were permitted to witness on that wonderful occasion. How many times Miss Mary clapped her hands with delight and rapture and wonderment, she did not know; and it was only afterwards, when she felt her hands quite sore with so much and such hearty clapping, that she remembered how possibly the soreness could have come about. But if you can think of Vesuvius and Etna and Hecla and Stromboli, and all the other volcanoes you can remember, all in eruption together, and helped in their great glowing grandeur by a hundred thousand furnaces in full blast—and you can see for yourselves what a light in the sky many less than a hundred

tints and shades of a hundred rainbows, until the eye was wearied with the glory and the mighty grandeur of the scene

And then came another burst of the fairy artillery, and another phase of darkness ; and after that artillery again, a glittering and a sparkling and a coruscation as of myriads upon myriads of electric sparks and flashes and wild blazes, with glow-worm and firefly and will-o'-the-wisp glimmerings between, paling down by degrees, till only the bluer and milder and paler lights reigned supreme ; and these were succeeded by a vast, all-absorbing sheet of opal tints and mother-of-pearl hues, and the glistering light of the moonshine and the fair fairy-rainbow of the moon. And the last thing Miss Mary's eyes consciously rested upon was little pale-blue flames of fire springing from each of her fingertips, as she held up her hands in admiration, and a lambent flame of the same colour irradiating all Mr. Greenbeard's court-dress, and his beard frizzling up as he slept—for he was as sound as a church, and with a scream and a rush to try and put the fire out, she found herself rubbing her eyes all by herself close to the fountain, and with a shower of rain beginning to fall. I need not say she made haste to get indoors.



VII

MISS MARY AMIDST THE FAIRIES AGAIN AND TAKEN TO SEE HOW THEY MAKE THEIR BUTTER AND WASH THEIR CLOTHES

IT was rather strange, but one day as Miss Mary was roaming a little disconsolately among the trees not very far away from the seemingly unobtrusive Arched Entrance to Fairy Realm, only not quite so near the green bridge as that is, she suddenly came upon an old woman, who seemed to be picking up sticks there which had been blown down by the wind during the preceding night. She had a poor sort of a cloak on, old and tattered, and a queer-shaped hat—if hat it was: but certainly it could not be called a bonnet—on, and tied over with a handkerchief, for there was still a good deal

of wind. Miss Mary did not think that any of the old women from the village, even, had any leave or right to be there for such a purpose, and she rather wondered to see her. And when she got nearer to the old lady, she felt quite sure she was not one of those who belonged to the villages near, and that she had certainly never seen her before. She had an unusual-looking sort of crutch-handled stick in her hand; and seemed to want the use of it too, for she walked very feebly, tottering every now and then; and her face was very thin and pale; and her teeth seemed all to be gone, for she mumbled a good deal, as old people do who are toothless; and besides, her nose came down much closer to her chin than is usual with people who still have got a few teeth left.

The old lady was so bent with age and weakness that, although she seemed to try to make a curtsy to Miss Mary when she came nearly close up to her, still she couldn't really manage it; and Miss Mary felt quite sorry for her, she seemed so weary and weak, and ill-able to totter about.

Well, just as Miss Mary was passing her, she tried to pick up rather a biggish stick that seemed to have been newly blown off from one of the trees above, and stooping slowly and with difficulty, and yet (as was plain) as well as her old bones, or the use of them, would let her, she staggered and nearly fell over; and trying to save herself from the fall, it

seemed as if she hurt her poor old back badly. she turned paler than she was before, and made a little sort of a cry, more than half a groan, as if in sore pain. Miss Mary was a little startled, as



She picked up the sticks.

she might be ; but she could not see the poor old creature, whether she had any business there or no, seeming to suffer so, and not try to be some sort of help to her. So she made her sit down on the grassy bank, the best seat she could find, and picked up the sticks the old woman had let drop when she

was so near falling herself, and laid them together again ; and also added the one the old lady was trying to pick up when the mishap befell her, to the previous lot or bundle. The stranger thanked her kindly ; but her voice was so weak, and she looked so pale and suffering, Miss Mary could not bear to see her. Still, she did not complain, and it was not until Miss Mary had asked her two or three times over if she was ill, that she said she was feeling sadly weak ; she had not had a morsel of food, not so much as a bite of bread, all day, and all day yesterday, and she had thought that if she could but gather a bundle of sticks, perhaps somebody would give her a crust of bread or a drink of milk in exchange for them.

Miss Mary could hardly help crying a little herself when she heard this, but instead of that, which wouldn't have helped the poor old thing a bit, she ran off as fast as she could, to get something for the half-starved old creature to eat and drink. And when she had given her the food she soon brought, she told the poor sufferer to try and eat it, and to wait and rest until she could find some one to come and help her better than she could herself.

For she had seen Mr. Greenbeard a little way off, as she ran with the meat and bread, and she thought he would be sure to know what was best to be done, and would be the readiest to help of any one she could think of besides.

die. Luckily, she had got the wine and water she had had given her for the old woman (but had forgotten in her hurry and anxiety) still in her pocket : and the moment she thought of that—for she knew that he ought to have something of that sort given him—she just got it out as quick as she could, and made him drink as much of it as he could. This did him ever so much good, and presently he was able to sit up ; and then Mary saw that his wooden leg was only splintered lengthwise, and not broken into two pieces by a short cross-fracture ; so that it might be spliced firmly together, if only there was enough strong string at hand ready, so as to make it firm enough for present and careful use , and as she happened to have a nice long bit in her pocket she began at once to tie it round herself, meaning to get Mr. Greenbeard to finish the job, so that it might actually be strong enough to use till they could contrive some way of getting the old chap carried away home.

But, while she was doing this, she happened to see two poor little field-mice which had tumbled out of their round ball of a nest, which had been disturbed or dislodged by the old man's fall , and though she would have liked to keep them and carry them home with her, still she thought that perhaps they would only linger and die, like an older one she had once had before , and so she put the poor little struggling things back into the nest

But by the time she found Mr. Greenbeard, it was clear that he too had met with his little adventure. For he was standing by the side of a poor old man who had but one leg, as well as only one eye, and he had put his stump (as people call it), or wooden leg, into a rabbit-hole, and broken his crutch in trying to save himself from a nasty fall. Besides which, some of the splinters of his broken crutch had flown up in his face and cut it, so that it was bleeding very badly ; while a large jaggy piece had stuck into his hand, and when Mr Greenbeard had drawn it out the blood had followed in a great spurt.

However, the old gentleman had got his hat full of water from the river, and had nearly stanchèd the bleeding of the wounded face, using his handkerchief sopped in the cold water as an application to lessen the flow of the blood. But the wounded hand was worse than the face ; and the moment Miss Mary saw how things were, she drew her own little pocket-handkerchief out, and helped Mr. Greenbeard all she could to tie it quite tight round the poor old man's hand, over a compress, so as to stop the blood from flowing so shockingly fast ; and then she sprinkled some of the water over the poor old fellow's face, while Mr. Greenbeard went for more help.

But she could not help crying a little outright now, she was so very sorry to see the old man suffering so much and seeming to have lost all his strength, and looking almost as if he was going to

die. Luckily, she had got the wine and water she had had given her for the old woman (but had forgotten in her hurry and anxiety) still in her pocket: and the moment she thought of that—for she knew that he ought to have something of that sort given him—she just got it out as quick as she could, and made him drink as much of it as he could. This did him ever so much good, and presently he was able to sit up; and then Mary saw that his wooden leg was only splintered lengthwise, and not broken into two pieces by a short cross-fracture, so that it might be spliced firmly together, if only there was enough strong string at hand ready, so as to make it firm enough for present and careful use, and as she happened to have a nice long bit in her pocket she began at once to tie it round herself, meaning to get Mr. Greenbeard to finish the job, so that it might actually be strong enough to use till they could contrive some way of getting the old chap carried away home.

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through the little hole in its upper side, and set the nest itself as right, or as much like what she thought it had been before, as ever she could.

By this time Mr. Greenbeard was coming back with such help as he could get, which wasn't very much at that time of day ; and as soon as she saw him approaching she ran to meet him, and to tell him that the poor man seemed really better, and that his poor, cracked wooden leg could easily be mended up for the present.

As she was running along almost as fast as she could, something fell out of the trees over her head, and in such a way that she couldn't help giving it a good hearty kick as she ran along in her haste, without the least thought of it : and in a minute she saw it was a beautiful squirrel, with its pretty dark eyes and glossy coat and bushy tail. But, poor little thing, it seemed to be sadly hurt, even if not killed : for it could only struggle a little, and not get up on to its feet, and go so swimmingly or undulatingly along as Mary had often seen the pretty creatures do along the balustrade in front of the house.

She felt so sorry at having hurt it herself, and even the thought that she had not meant it did not comfort her much ; but she took it up off the ground very gently and carefully, so as not to hurt it more. Mr. Greenbeard was near enough to see what she was doing, and called out to her quite quickly, ' Take care, Mary, it will bite.'

But Mary seemed to think more of the poor creature's pain and hurt than of any danger to her own hands, and tried to hold it as gently as possible, and hoped it was not so much hurt as it seemed—perhaps only stunned or horribly frightened. And, as it chanced, she had two nuts in one of her pockets, and though Mr. Greenbeard was rather inclined to smile at what she was doing, she put them both quite close to the poor squirrel's mouth in case it should want food. But there is little need to say the pretty little animal didn't take any notice of them.

Well, they went back together to the poor man, and found him a good deal freshened up. His face and his hand were neither of them bleeding now, and Miss Mary's wine and water had done him such a lot of good. And when he said so to her, then she recollected all at once how she came to have the bottle still in her pocket, and that the old man's accident, and her fright at the bleeding, and all the rest that had happened, had made her forget the old dame she had been herself helping so short a time before.

So she told Mr Greenbeard all about that matter too. Mr. Greenbeard's first thought, however, was to make better bandages for the old man's face and hand, and then to finish Miss Mary's work on the fractured wooden leg, which, as it happened, he was able to do rather well. For he had been twisting

some little wire flower-holders for Miss Mary, and had got a coil of the wire he had been using for the purpose, as well as his pliers, still about him ; and with the help of the wire and his handy little tool he soon made the stump as tight and almost



He soon made the stump as tight as it was before.

as strong as it was before. And then he proceeded to patch up the unluckily broken crutch as well as he could, so as to make it of at least a little use. The old man said he was sure he was strong enough to walk, at least a little way now, if only Mr. Green-beard could support him a little on one side, for

fear the patched-up crutch should prove untrustworthy if too much weight were put upon it

And the next thing being to see after the old woman, the party were not long in setting off together—Mr. Greenbeard supporting the old man, and Miss Mary bearing the disabled squirrel, which she had laid in her hat, as easily and gently as she possibly could.

Well, the old man stumped along quite cannily, considering all things, with his mended leg, and as soon as they got near enough to see where the old woman had been left sitting, they saw her trotting about quite actively, picking up more sticks and adding them to her bundle, which was now of quite a respectable size. Miss Mary's squirrel also seemed to recover himself greatly, and began to sit up in the hat, with his tail up like a squirrel that is all right; and really he looked quite handsome as well as lively. Miss Mary was afraid that he might any moment try to jump out of the hat, or at least out of the nest she had made for him in it, and seek to get away and scramble up some of the trees they were passing so close to. But no: he was seemingly quite content where he was, and neither she nor Mr. Greenbeard could well believe their eyes when they saw him pick up one of the nuts and, holding it squirrel-fashion, begin to peg away at it with his sharp teeth as if he meant to have it for lunch forthwith.

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This was so surprising, and so delightful, to Miss Mary especially, to have a quite wild thing so tame and gentle, and so confiding—and so quickly too—that she forgot to notice anything else, and Mr. Greenbeard was as unnoticing as she was, although there was something to notice, and right well worth noticing too, both behind them and before their faces. For behind them came the mouse-nest Miss Mary had put the two little mouselings into so kindly and gently and carefully (propping it up, moreover, as well as ever she could in the place it had occupied before), rolling and trundling, and trundling and rolling, and hanging quite well together notwithstanding its unaccustomed locomotion, with the two little mouse-heads out at the hole, as if to see what was befalling their snug and hitherto quiescent home. This was behind them as I have said, while before them was the old woman, quite lively and brisk, and not looking the least shabby or badly clothed, nor yet at all pale and weak and sickly.

But presently both Miss Mary and her elderly companion got rather startled, and in real earnest. For a woodpecker that had, as they had heard, been tapping a beech tree—I don't think it was a "hollow" one: but I can't be quite sure—and tapping it loudly too as they had drawn near, just flew down on to Miss Mary's head, and said quite plainly (and the moment she heard it she was sure it wasn't the first time she had been addressed by it), 'I have broken

my bill tapping this hard tree. Couldn't a kind little girl mend it for me?'

You may be sure Miss Mary looked up and all about, and behind as well as in front, and so did Mr. Greenbeard also; and I think it was quite enough to make them. Well, what they saw behind them was the queer mouse-carriage getting bigger and bigger every second, and the little mouse-heads looking less and less mousey, and the mamma-mouse, unseen before, just pushing behind and making it roll forward, showing herself more plainly every moment, and appearing to be changing her ordinary fur-coat for a grand dress of velvet.

But astonished as they were, they could not keep their eyes fixed on the surprising mouse-nest; for a musical little laugh just in front of them sounded quite pleasantly and familiarly, and just at the same time the squirrel gave a cheery, chirping little cry, and the woodpecker on Miss Mary's head laughed a pleasant, rippling laugh, very much nicer than the sweetest-voiced woodpecker in any natural wood ever gave forth — though they do laugh a good deal and pretty loudly, as everybody knows, and very jolly laughs too.

But what do you think they saw when they turned round, quite startled-like, to see who it was that was laughing such a sweet melodious laugh in front of them? Well, you won't be able to guess: so I must just tell you.

The poor old woman who had been in such a wretched plight when Miss Mary had given her the bread and meat, and who had begun to gather sticks again when they first caught sight of her as they were coming back to look after her condition, was now a lady of rather small stature, in a very different style of dress from what she had been seen in before : for she had a grand brocade petticoat on, and high-heeled shoes with diamond buckles in them, a curious but such a pretty peaked hat, a farthingale of some beautiful material such as they had never set eyes on before, her stick in her hand, to be sure, but made of ivory and handled with jasper, and her face, with a look of age on it certainly, but of age that seemed to be very young and very sweet and very lovely, and her bundle of sticks—well, you never saw such sticks, I'm sure! They looked like live snakes rather than dry, old sticks, as they kept twisting and twining together quite like real living snakes ; and when they brightened and sparkled and flashed and glanced with a thousand glorious hues and lustres, Miss Mary could not help thinking of Mr. Green-beard's wondrous neck-chain, and that it would be just like what this late bundle of sticks had come to be, if only it had not been so tiny and delicate.

But they could not go on gazing even at this wonder for ever, and they soon turned to look again at the lady—no longer a poor old woman. And the younger and sweeter and lovelier she continued to

grow, the more it dawned upon them that they had seen her before, that, indeed, she was anything but a stranger. And truly it was so—they had seen her before, she was no stranger in the real sense. For it was the Fairy Princess herself!



No longer a poor woman.

And the old man—they had forgotten all about him in the strangeness and the wonder of all that had befallen during the last brief space of time. But there he was, as good to see and as easy to recognise as the beautiful Princess, being none other than the

Lord High Chamberlain of Fairy Realm, with his patched-up crutch turned into his wand of office, Miss Mary's string and Mr. Greenbeard's wire binding having become the loveliest fillets of chased silver and wrought gold.

And the squirrel too—what had become of him? And the woodpecker also, and the mamma-mouse, and the wee, wee mouselings?

Why, as to these last, they were two of the six fairies who had had charge of dressing Miss Mary that time of the great Entertainment and the Illuminations. The grown-up mouse was the fairy who had taken care of Miss Mary at the Princess's bidding, and conducted her to the Fairy Refreshment Bower, and supplied all she desired, and more, in the way you cannot but recollect; and the woodpecker was the chief officer of the fairy craftsmen in wood; and the squirrel was the Warden of the Wardrobe in Fairy Realm, who had been directed to be sure that Miss Mary was suitably arrayed on occasion of all, or any of, her visits to Fairyland. Miss Mary and Mr. Greenbeard knew them all the minute they had taken on their proper forms again.

j) For a space, not a very long one perhaps, both be, the young lady and the old gentleman were too ~~much~~ surprised to do anything but look and gaze ~~at~~ her sender; although they had remembered their ~~and~~ enough on recognising the Princess to make ~~some~~ acknowledgments of her presence. But

she speedily put them quite at their ease, and taking Miss Mary's hand she said in her sweet, low, musical voice, every tone of which made the listener feel it did not proceed from mere earthly or mortal lips, 'Well, Little One, so you know how to be kind and gentle, and to show mercy and pity on the poor and weak and helpless. That is nice, and as it should be, and as I was sure it would be. Never be anything else. All the things that have life, pretty or not pretty, can suffer. Don't you ever make one of them suffer. I love them all. All of us that are Fairies love them all; and none of them should ever suffer if we had the power to prevent it. You must try and lessen suffering and pain, and always to help the helpless, and the weak, and sad, and poor' And then she laughed again, such a clear, sweet-sounding laugh, and added, 'But Fairies ought not to preach sermons, now, ought they? But come away - we have other things before us now.'

And, would you believe it?—No, I am sure you would not! But all those things that had seemed to be sticks—and Miss Mary was sure they *had been* sticks, and nothing but sticks, when the poor tottering old woman had been seen trying to pick them up, and nearly tumbling over in the attempt—disentangled themselves in a trice and became flying cars, each fashioned by a lovely snake by means of its own coils, so that two or three of the fairy host

could take their seats inside of the hollow formed the coils, each a little lower than the other. Mary was presently seated with the Princess in one of them, Mr Greenbeard with the Chamberlain, and the other notable fairies, increased now by scores and hundreds of what had before seemed to be only gay birds flitting about in the trees overhead but which were in reality members of the Fairy Court, two or three or four clustering together in those extemporised cars. And as they proceeded on their way such a brilliant stream of meteors seemed to be passing through the air, if only an mortal had been there to see.

And, for my own part, I believe there were two or three pairs of mortal eyes there to see. Because I feel quite sure that a story that was told me about the gamekeeper and the gardener, and another one about two who were out the same day, and talking to one another, was a true one; for they all felt, just at the same moment, as if they had had a very strong and pungent pinch of snuff given them, which made them sneeze and sneeze as they had never sneezed before in their lives; so that, being hay-time, they thought they must have taken hay-fever very badly. All the same, as they sneezed in that persisting, bothering way, they certainly saw hundreds of bright flashes in the sky, such as they had never seen in any other fit of sneezing they had ever been troubled with; and whatever people say

to the contrary, my idea is that they may have seen the flight of fairies I am telling you of, and taken them for the usual flashings and sparks seen by people when sneezing.

Well, the flight was a tolerably far one. only it seemed much too short to Miss Mary, once she got accustomed to the nature of her vehicle, and forgot that she had seen a large green and gold and gemmy snake twine itself up to form it, for it was so pleasant going through the air so, and in company with the dear Princess too, and even brighter and more delightful than in the drive behind the king-fishers.

And where do you think they were going to? You will hardly believe me when I tell you, for I am sure you never heard of it before; and it is sure to be quite a new thought to any one except such folks as Miss Mary and Mr. Greenbeard, and the trusty chronicler of all these remarkable experiences.

But, to tell you as quickly and in as few words as I can, they were going to the Fairies' Dairy Farm, and after that to the Fairy Wash-house, which was under the charge of the Fairies of the Wells and Springs.

Of course you all know that, as long as ever we can recollect anything about the fairies and their doings (in our own part of the world, at all events), they have always been spoken of as world-famous

makers of butter, and, besides that, as such clever industrious workers, not at the 'wash-tub'—that is quite a silly, nowadays sort of notion—but at the clear, bright, gushing springs and kelds of the country-side which was favoured and brightened by their beautiful presence and habitancy.

In the old days, they washed their clothes in the clear kelds, and bleached them on the smooth greens, and bittled them on big, smooth, flat stones near by, and all under the light of the pale, pure moon; or they made their delicate butter with the old-world care and cleanliness, clapping and working and moulding it as mere mortal butter, even by the most careful and menseful and well-skilled house-mistress, could never be dealt with. But it could not be expected that no advance upon the old-world ways should ever have been thought of and adopted among the fairy community. And, indeed, it was very far from being the case.

But to resume our story. Notwithstanding Miss Mary's perfect contentment with her present experience, and the lack of any wish at all in her mind to cease gliding along the sweet breeze, the flight of the snake-cars had to come to an end, and the party descended to the surface below them, in front of what seemed to be a lofty, soaring rock-face, with and jutting projections of many-coloured and porphyry, and granite, red and white, gied. The rock-face was diversified with

the loveliest verdure, and made bright with trickling rills sparkling through the greenery and over the craggy masses, pellucid as crystal, while in the front itself there was a cavernous entrance, only not such as to remind the visitor of dark gruesome dens and caves. All was far too lightsome and bright for that.

Well, the cars came to the ground in orderly succession, and, each snake uncoiling itself in the gracefullest, gentlest sort of way, the passengers found themselves standing, without effort on alighting, in front of the nature-made portal to the seeming cavern of light and shining. The Princess led the way, holding Miss Mary by her hand, and they entered a spacious and lofty sort of hall, light as the brightest above-the-earth summer's day, and yet cool and pleasant as the costliest marble-hall in the hottest of the dog-days, with fountains and jets of ice-cold, crystal-clear water spreading itself all over the lovely polished marble slabs provided for the making up of the butter; while beyond was the department of the self-moving churns; and beyond that again the allotted space for the preparation of the cream. No noisy "separators," deafening one with their harsh, discordant, brain-muddling din, were here: but the soft murmuring of gentle streams, and the rustling of the plumage of the trees just gently moved by a caressing soft wind, and the waving of a few pearly wands over

the miniature seas of fairy milk from the fairy-pastured kine of beautiful Fairy Realm.

And then the gracious golden cream was borne to the intermediate hall, the hall of the fairy churns; and instead of awkward-shaped, more awkwardly-moving mortals' churns, reminding one, in their motion, of distorted humpbacked dwarfs playing at pitiful, string-halt-motioned leap-frog, there was a gracious, modulated and undulating movement, like the dreamy wavelets of a soft, gentle, summer-evening sea in its beautiful, calm procession of peace and placidity; and then, to the mild, soft, soothing music of a Fairy Orchestra—lo! the butter came. No trouble, no uncertainty, nothing but order, pleased obedience to Nature's law, and the always issue of a bountiful producing.

Next the golden, crumbling masses were swiftly borne—mortal eyes could not discern how—to the marble slabs, and the fountains and jets were all in play, and ice-flake "Scotch-hands," and moulders and presses, unmelting, immaculate, unerring in their dealing with the golden masses, made the butter up in such guise and into such forms as never entered into mortal butter-makers' minds to conceive.

Swans there were, but they swam or flew, singing an imitation of the deathless death-song of poetry. Fishes there were, but they swam, not floated, in the crystal bowls they were placed in, moving from side

to side of the vessels as gracefully as the dolphins leap in the calm sea. Birds there were, such as the phoenix amid its mimic flames, that flickered and gleamed like real flames, yet those rather of the ice-king than the fire-king, pale, pearly, glimmering ; as if the bird with its ardent eye felt the spring of beginning youthfulness again, felt the joy and the goodness of life, and the assuredness of life for always and ever. And trees there were, and flowers were there, with the branches of the trees murmuring in the soothing breeze, moving with a slumberous softness and lissome, waving grace, as the boughs swayed a little, as if with the presence of ethereal life and spirit ; and the flowers bloomed and bent as if with a sense of modest beauty, and grew graciously rosy or shrinkingly pale as the gaze of the beholder rested and dwelt upon them. Oh, the marvels of that butter-making and moulding ! Be sure Miss Mary will never forget it as long as her recollection endures.

I could tell you a great deal more about this strange fairy factory, and the storage of the produce. that is, when storage was thought necessary. The place it was taken to in that case looked like a miniature glass palace. But it was not of glass, and still less of crystal, clear and pellucid as it was. It was of ice, but ice that knew not what melting meant ; ice as perennial as the existence of the fairies themselves ; and all the chambers, and

store-places and shelves, and all else connected with the storing of the butter, was of the same material. The very principle of perpetual preservation, as well as the spirit of purity, was embodied in that wonderful place of deposit.

The departure from this factory of factories differed in manner and place from the arrival. There was a postern, or means of egress, from the extremity of the suite of halls or apartments that have been previously mentioned, which was reached by what seemed to be a covered way in the side of a steep rugged bank; and, passing through that, a circular place was reached which might have been taken for the bottom of a well, only it was so light as to forbid the thought that truth could ever have found concealment there. The loveliest, freshest, thickest foliage clothed the rising walls, which glittered in the light with many different spars and lustrous metallic facets. The Princess and the Chamberlain and the other great folks of the fairy court retained what may be spoken of as their gala size, and of course Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary continued to be of the same stature as usual: but all the rest of the fairy company just lessened down in size and height and form the very moment the Chamberlain touched a li- knob in the wall, which was a second after- o by a musical little tinkle, when the floor move up and up, the fairy retinue in their

wee forms just clustering about all the greater folks, the Princess only excepted, like a swarm of lovely butterflies, as lovely to the sight as they were small, and in a time that seemed strangely short to Miss Mary, they found themselves far above the highest lights of the Dairy Farm, and gliding softly and delightfully down a slightly sloping incline or slide. When the motion ceased, all stepped out, the attendant fairies assuming their holiday forms again, while the two visitors began to look around and wonder where they were. Spread before them, and extending as far as their eyes could carry, was a sheet of shimmering surface. Water they thought it should be, and yet it did not exactly look like water. Mr Greenbeard, if not Miss Mary, had often heard of 'sky-blue' as applied to milk that had had water mixed with it in Do-the-boys-Hall sort of schools, or by dishonest milk-sellers, and he had often seen the queer look that buttermilk has in some peculiarities of light, and he had long known that either hue or tinge was not an easy one to describe and almost as bad to represent. But if you can fancy a great spreading sheet of fluid as clear as clear can be, and yet with that sort of faintly bluish tinge in it, such as white silk shot with faint sky-blue would be—then you can form an idea of what this great expanse was like to the eye. The Fairy Princess saw how full of wonder and suppressed inquiry Miss Mary's eyes were, and

with a gentle loving smile she said, ' Ah, Little One, there you see one of our little devices for conducting and facilitating the work of the fairy washing-days. You mortals often talk of the Moon's rays "looking watery", but you don't know that you have stumbled on a great truth in expressing yourselves so. All that sheet of water you are gazing at is not just the water from the clouds caught before it reaches your world through a dirty, smoky atmosphere, but it is purer still than that. *It is obtained by our fairy processes of pressing the moonbeams, and gathering all that distils from them into this great reservoir; and you will presently see how it is used as well as stored.*' And as the whole fairy retinue moved on, with the Princess and her guests in front, Miss Mary saw, to her wonder, a long series of little streamlets cascading down the side of the elevation they were standing upon, and that they were arranged like the strings of a harp, or even of a large piano. Those nearest to where they stood were short, the next longer, those beyond longer still, and those that were farthest off the longest of all. The first or nearest fell into a sort of hollow or basin in a rock shelf, the rock being the purest and whitest marble, and there were some delicate, gauzy fairy vestures in the basin, on which the little trickling fairy-like cascade fell. As they were shifted, by some wonderful arrangement or machinery which was not apparent, into

another like basin lower down, with a larger streamlet cascading into it; and so it went on and on, each removal bringing the fairy raiment within reach of a stronger falling stream, till, from the last, it came out so refined in purity and absolute freedom from spot or stain, that it was fit to clothe the sweet pure Princess herself. The very Sun himself, in his clear-sighted majesty in the heavens, could detect no failure, no defect or flaw, in that perfect pureness.

And the drying—Oh! that was more wonderful than even the washing, and I am sure I hardly know how I am to explain it to you. But I daresay you have often amused yourselves with blowing bubbles. And if you have, you have seen them spread out, and grow bigger and bigger, and take lovely colours on their glistening surfaces, and then they ascend, and after a brief space burst, and a drop or two falls from them to the ground. But there was no bursting on this drying-ground in the work of drying, although the fairy vestures did spring up into the air as if blown out of some unseen mysterious tubes or pipes, and did expand and become lustrous and luminous in and through their fairy delicacy and gauziness; but they came down again from on high, dry and crisp and fresh as gently falling snow; and as they slowly, floatingly, peacefully fell, Miss Mary saw some of them gently folding themselves, and others smoothed

on invisible boards, but not without the one-time familiar sound of the bittle and pin: for these sounds just rose softly and faintly, but sweetly and musically, as if heard in the calm moonlight of a still, restful, dewy evening in autumn.

And then the 'clean things' were placed in lovely baskets, which looked almost whiter and purer than the clothes themselves. And no wonder: for they were worked and wreathed and woven out of the rays of starlight which, in a very bright frosty winter's night, we see flickering and flashing, and failing for a second, as if affected, as earthly flames are, by currents of air or gentle gusts of wind. But this flickering and failing of the stars' rays is, though perhaps you did not know it, commonly caused by the fairies breaking them off—for they are easily broken those very frosty nights I speak of—on purpose to make into baskets and other such purely clean things; which can easily be done when the frost is out of them and they can be safely twined and twisted. And the next thing was to pile the baskets on wondrous fairy wains, which were drawn by steam water-spiders, whose long legs worked at a wonderful rate as they whisked the wains along to the Fairy Clean Clothes Closet, leaving out only a few that had to be more specially bleached by the Water-sprites, because they were the linen belonging to the Princess's own wardrobe of the Bedroom Department.

In order to get there, however, they had to go over a bridge which looked just as if it was part of a rainbow made by the moon—lunar rainbows they call them, and just when they got to the highest part of the arch, there was *such* a loud crack, which startled Miss Mary sadly, and she thought directly that the bridge had broken and that the wains were falling, falling, falling! But it was



Wrecking her tea table

nothing of the sort. It was only the tumbling down, with a great clatter, of the sugar basin and all the sugar in it, which in her sound sleep, with her head and arms laid on the table, she had accidentally pushed over by a sudden movement of her elbow.

- 'Oh! the clothes, the clothes!' she cried, and then, waking up quite wide, she said, 'Psha' and left the room without a word to anybody.



VIII

MISS MARY HEARS OF A FAIRY WEDDING
TOWARD GOES TO THE COUNTRY OF
THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH FAIRIES,
AND SEES THINGS THERE

'NO! there are not any fairies. And I don't believe there ever were any fairies''

This was once again Miss Mary's declaration one day when she and Mr. Greenbeard were having a stroll — looking for birds' nests, she said, but not looking in the most likely places; and, as he said, forgetting a little that birds did not make nests all the year round.

For he had asked her if she had had any letter or message lately from her fairy friends; and when she gave him this answer, his reply was — 'Oh! what a disappointment! For I had fancied this was just

the very day for another little journey or jaunt of exploration in Fairy Realm. Didn't you see that strange-looking envelope, with cross-bars of blue and silver on it, and so deeply glazed, which I got this morning at breakfast-time ?'

'See it? Of course I saw it,' answered Miss Mary, 'and everybody else as well. And we all thought it had got your own wedding cards in it, sent to be approved of. When are you going to be married, you silly old grandfather?'

Mr Greenbeard gently explained to the young lady that when a certain young person had herself, less than two years ago, called him her husband, and afterwards had lowered him to being only her lover, and told him to be content with writing love-letters to her, he had quite given up all thoughts, and necessarily all hopes, of wedding-cards of his own. Such sweet, pretty things must be saved for happy young folks, and not thought of for tottery, gropy old souls, such as he was. 'All the same,' he added a minute or so afterwards, 'it was not such a very bad guess for a fly-away-bit-of-a-girl to have made for there were wedding-cards in the pretty envelope she had seen; and if she had not been so very positive that "there were no fairies, and never had been any," he should have said that those very sweet, lovely, delicate, little wedding-cards he had got in that envelope had been intended for Miss Mary herself; and had only been sent to him to be handed over to her. Only, there

being no fairies,' he continued, 'there can't be any fairy wedding-cards; and of course what seemed to me to be wedding-cards, with a little tiny corner turned down, couldn't be fairy wedding-cards at all, even though I thought I was able—with the help of that somewhat clever ring of mine, you know, Mary—to read the name of the Princess's young sister. For everybody knows that the fairies marry when they are still very young indeed, and quite little to what they will be some day. But it's no use, and it is such a pity.'

And then the old gentleman broke off suddenly, with such a great sigh.

'What's no use? And what's the pity?' asked the young lady, very sharply and testily. And scarcely a moment after she cried, 'Oh! did you see that dear, bonny pet of a squirrel? He jumped on my very hand! Oh! but he was so frightened, and scuttled away as if he was afraid I would hurt him.'

'Oh! nothing much,' said Mr. Greenbeard, in answer to the question 'What's no use, and what's the pity?': 'only, as I see you have your ring on your finger—'

Again Mr. Greenbeard did not finish his sentence: for as he spoke those last words Miss Mary looked at her finger, and with a great start and a sudden cry she jumped up, showing the pretty ring on the finger it had been fitted on to so strangely that

wonderful day of the expedition to the Fairy Dairy and Wash-house establishments

'Oh! OH! OH!' she cried, half frightened and half delighted. 'Oh! how could it get there? And whatever does it mean?'

'Oh! nothing,' said Mr. Greenbeard, 'except that there are no fairies, and never were any. And there is no fairy realm, and you never got into it, and there is no pavilion, and you don't believe——'

'Now, do be quiet, you tiresome old tease,' was the interruption that stopped Mr. Greenbeard's speech, 'and do tell me how this ring got on my finger, and what it was put there for, and everything.'

Mr. Greenbeard said 'everything' was a big order. And how was he to tell her anything, and much more everything, when she interrupted and snubbed him at almost every word he said?

But Miss Mary did not even cry 'Psha!'—she only pleaded with him to tell her, and to tell her quickly, because she felt quite bad at not knowing what was meant or intended. For she was sure the ring being there meant that something strange and wonderful, and more than only nice, was going to happen.

Quite ready to be persuaded, the old gentleman told her that the ring had been put on her finger by that pretty squirrel she had thought was so frightened by accidentally touching her hand. but, as he thought

himself, it was more frolicsomeness than fright. And then he asked her, 'Were there any squirrels in Fairy Realm?'

But that question made her remember the poor lame squirrel she had carried so gently in her hat, that time before; and that made her think of the squirrel turning into the Lord High Chamberlain of the Fairy Court, and all the beautiful things which had happened on that now perfectly-well-remembered occasion; and then the next minute she saw the tiny wedding-cards in the old gentleman's hands, and found herself able, by the help of the ring, to read what was written on the cards, and on such a lovely, sweet little note-sheet which lay close beside them in the open envelope. The marriage was between the Princess Sunlight-in-the-dewdrop and the Crown Prince of the Fairies of the Water-under-the-Earth, and there was to be a great entertainment, and after that the Fairies of the Realm of the upper earth were to—as mortals would express it—'make an excursion' and see the young couple home to their Palace below the Water-under-the-Earth.

If it had been a few minutes sooner, Miss Mary would have cried 'Psha!' at once, and have declared that there were no waters under the earth: for the earth was a ball like a flattened orange in shape, and it was always going on and on in its year-long journey round the sun, and there was no water under it, and of course could not be. But she was far too

much interested for that now, and all she said was, 'When are we to go?' And when Mr. Greenbeard told her—in fact he showed her the day and the time mentioned in the note—all she said or wanted to say was, 'Why! that's to-day, and now! And oh! I do believe we are there already!'

She had good reason for thinking so, and for saying so, even as loudly as she did. For there they were in the midst of such a throng, so gay, so beautiful, so lively and sportive, and so graceful and glorious in their grand wedding apparel! But mingled up among all the other fairies, who seemed quite like old acquaintances to Miss Mary, were a great number of others that were quite strangers to her; and their clothing—whatever could it be made of? or however could it be fashioned? And as for the colours of it—she had never seen anything so lovely, so fascinatingly, bewitchingly beautiful! The hues and tints and tinges weren't the same for two minutes together! They were so bright and so gorgeous that the mortal eye would have ached with seeing the beauty of them if they had lasted for more than a few seconds. And the changes were as rapid as beautiful. Just think of a large soap-bubble just blown in the bright sunshine, and how, as it wavers and sways before beginning to soar, you see golds and greens and blues and purples and violets and pinks and carmines and ruby-tints and opal-tints, and every tinge and tint and shift of

colour there is—and then it is gone! But this glory of colour I am telling you of never failed, or was lost, or disappeared, or burst up into that nothingness, which seems like ugliness through the sheer disappearance of beauty. Those colours and shades and hues were continuous, though as changeable as they were lasting and continuous. And so Miss Mary's eyes could drink in all the beautifulness without distress, and still more without the feeling of having seen enough and wanting to see no more.

But this was only the colouring of the dresses. What was the material? What were they made of?

Did you ever see seed-pearls? But no: perhaps not. And if you had, they would not be bright enough to represent—no, not even to give you a faint idea of what Miss Mary was at this time gazing upon. Have you seen and noticed the bright bubbles, tiny as flies' eyes almost, springing out of effervescing water, or the myriads and millions of them when the bright, clear, green sea-water is stirred up by the paddle or propeller of a steam-boat? Well, fancy the thousands and thousands, and millions on millions of them all caught and wrought together in a delicate fabric, and each one among them with all the colours of the sun-tinted bubble caught and retained. That's what the raiment of the Fairies of the Water-under-the-Earth was made of, as mortals' eyes beheld it; and the bridesmaids wore robes of dissolved pearls all run together, and

setting together as the solvent dried out, no thicker than gold-leaf and more beautiful than pure moon-light, and decorated with living creatures out of the Water-under-the-Earth, a thousand times more gorgeously coloured than humming-birds, and as good to see as the Fairies themselves, ay, such as to make the lady who had her dress trimmed with gem-beetles and real humming-birds just lie down and die with sheer envy and jealousy—as perhaps might have served her right.

Well, I can't tell you all about the wedding: that is not likely, nor yet about the entertainment, nor anything else that followed after, wonderful and delightful as it was to Miss Mary and her companion. I must go on to the excursion to the Water-under-the-Earth.

To tell you the truth, Miss Mary was a little frightened at the prospect of having to go to such an unexplored region. I call it 'region,' for I hardly think I am justified in calling it 'a country.' She had ugly doubts too about getting wet, and she almost began to feel cold and chilly, and all clammy and horrid. But before she knew it (and how it came to pass she did not know) she seemed to herself to be walking along the bank of the river she knew so well at home, and surrounded, both she herself and Mr. Greenbeard, by the happy, happy host of rejoicing fairies. Nay, she was sure she was there; and there were the well-known primroses in

their hundreds and thousands, growing on the familiar wooded banks, only—she rubbed her eyes again and again to be sure there was no mistake about it—only, they were bigger and brighter and more beautiful by far than she had ever seen them,



Each fairy stopped to gather one

ever fancied they could be, before. And then—why, what a strange thing! each fairy stopped to gather one—one only, no more—and the moment each was touched—why, what a wonder! it began to change colour, and became so bright and gay and shining, every one with a different hue, every colour

ordinary-seeming primroses but a minute or two before, began of themselves to grow higher and longer and thinner and clearer, till they were so thin and clear that the brightest, most pellucid glass was not more transparent; and as they grew in height and clearness, these sides began to close over the head of the occupant, and they all began slowly and gently to sink into the bosom of the water, and with a sweet murmur of chiming water-bells, these strange navigators, in their closed-up barks, found themselves among the great fishes, each with a water-sprite guiding and directing its graceful motion, and each expressing a lively welcome to these unwonted passengers through their element.

Down, down, DOWN they went, the motion and the sensation of it proving more delightful, and the surrounding spectacle more wonderful, with every fathom passed through. Neither Mr. Greenbeard nor Miss Mary felt any discomfort, any trepidation, any uneasiness. All was as easy and delightful as motion is in one's dreams, when one floats along above the surface of the earth with no effort or exercise of either limb or mind, only of will, and with an easiness and pleasantness such as even the fleetest fowls of the air cannot know.

Down, down, DOWN still!--each fathom descended showing things and shapes and beings more numerous, more beautiful, more fascinating,

more astonishing, more fantastic, more sportive, more mirth-inspiring than the last, till, in the end—and Miss Mary wished the end hadn't come so soon—they penetrated through the mighty water-band that belongs to the Water-under-the-Earth, and issued into a great inconceivable void, that was neither land nor water, nor anything else ever clearly conceived of by mortal mind, but was spread, as a great high wall is about a city on mortals' ground, all round the region of the Fairies of the Water-under-the Earth.

But now the skiffs unclosed of themselves, and became floating cars—cars that floated in the soft balmy air of the region they had reached—and went on with a pleasant, soothing undulating sort of movement, like that of a woodpecker's flight, till they came actually within the central domains of the region of the Fairies of the Water-under-the-Earth, who were cousins twice removed of the Fairies of the earth above.

Can you fancy a forest, not of trees, but of things we can only form a notion of by thinking of the trees we have seen growing at home? Can you think of shrubs and bushes and plants and flowers all to match? Can you imagine great upward rushes of growth, darting, forking, bending, wreathing, blending, separating, towering, like the flames of a burning moor by night all caught and fixed from moment to moment, and waiting to be gazed at in

their unimaginable grace and beauty and perpetual verdure? Can you fancy countless graceful, wondrously painted, gloriously decorated or illuminated creatures swimming, floating, gliding, winding, intertwining, sometimes high up among what, for want of a better name, we must call the foliage or the frondage of the seeming forest and its diverse growths; sometimes lower down among the mighty limbs; sometimes at the seeming surface-level, and all among the thickets and clumps and groups and borders, and all as gentle and loving and caressing as the gentlest and tamest and lovingest of the pets which mortals make among the creatures of this bright earth of ours? Such a scene as this, only a hundred times more true and touching, was what Mary, led along by the Princess as usual, now found herself in the midst of. But it was a short time indeed before her attention was called quite away from such matters as these: for the welcome of the newly married Crown Princess had to be celebrated; and I hardly suppose you would readily imagine the way in which that was managed. Fireworks and bonfires and illuminations, and great feasts of oven roasted whole, and casks of wine and beer set running for all to drink at, I dare say you will think of first of all. Only you must remember that this region we have got to was not a very favourable place for fireworks and bonfires and ordinary illuminations; or even for roastings, or

any other sorts of cooking done by the aid of fire. It was the Region of the Water-under-the-Earth, and, nowhere that ever I have been, do water and fireworks and great blazes and cookings go together.

No: the illuminations and the big blazes and the thunderous reports of great cannon must either be done without, or else take a very different form in such a region as that.

But I daresay you will be thinking that it would not only be difficult to get up a big blaze there, or even a little lamp-light, but that, if it was actually through, rather than in, the Water under-the-Earth, any sort of light at all, sunlight or moonlight or firelight being equally impossible, would be alike out of the question.

Well, that sounds reasonable enough, at least at first. But still, there is certainly one thing to think of. We all of us talk of the "sun setting," and of the "moon setting" too; and often we say "the sun is going down," or that "he will soon be out of sight." But why "out of sight," and where is he "going down" to?

Now, that is a question worth considering. I know I have often stood on the top of a big hill, and seen him go down. And he seemed to go down past the end of the world; and when the hill was near the sea, the great, big, wide ocean, I saw for myself how that could be done. And when he had actually "set" or "gone down," where had he

gone to? Where, do you suppose, but to the other side of the earth, or "under the earth"? Well, then, you see that if he isn't any longer blazing for us on or above the earth, and giving us light and warmth and heat, it is quite possible he may be blazing and giving heat for the regions under the earth. And another thing. You have often seen when the sun, or even the moon, was shining brightly on the surface of a pool in the river, or any big sheet of water, or the sea itself when calm, what a wonderfully, brilliantly shining reflection was given back. Well now, if you think, when all those Fairies, and Miss Mary and Mr Greenbeard, had gone down and Down and DOWN in those marvellous skiffs that had become the prettiest diving bells ever thought of, the waters they had dived through must have remained above them, though we may not be able to understand how it was all managed. And then when the sun had gone down under the earth, and had begun to shine up, as of course he must have done, you can easily see how his glorious shining must still have been reflected, only downwards instead of upwards, and how the sun blaze down there found such a vast reflecting surface must have been brighter than the brightest sunshine even on a bright summer day among ourselves. Well, I for one think that matter must be clear enough, and so I can go on with my story.

And this is the point we have come to. The

Reception and Welcome was just commencing. The mingled company of Fairies from the Earth above and from the Water-under-the-Earth, surrounding and escorting the newly married Prince and Princess, came presently to what we mortals should have called a square (only it was about five times as big as Trafalgar Square in London), all carpeted with the greenest and softest moss-like growth of some kind, deep enough to cover the feet of an ordinary mortal, but which was hardly depressed at all by the light-some feet of the gay, brilliant throng which was now treading over it. Around it were verdant walls—not sombre and dark and half-sullen in look, like clipped yew-hedges, massive and solemn, such as we see sometimes in gardens of old-fashioned mortal planting, but bright, sparkling, glancing, or here and there looking more like frosted silver or ever-greens enamelled with hoar-frost, the growth on the whole seeming to remind one of the glorious corals of the Indian Ocean. Some of them were low and fantastic-looking, others, and especially at the far end, where there seemed to be a Palace of Domes and Pinnacles, all lit up and glowing—not flashing or blazing—with the water-reflected sunlight, and taking a thousand colours as the refracted lights played and danced through the area they had to traverse. Nearer the Palace these walls seemed to lose themselves in the depths of what (for want of better words) we must term the

green sky of the great waters above. As the company advanced into this spacious square, all at once myriads on myriads, and millions on millions, of small, translucent, brilliant creatures sprang up from among the moss-like growth, glowing and glistening and glancing in the pure, soft, gently-coloured atmosphere, twice as full of light as an ordinary summer's day, dancing and careering and curving so as to form a moving canopy—almost a magnificently glorious arch—over the thronging, advancing Fairy host. Every one of these countless creatures was as full of light, of subdued colour, as a *precious diamond*, and *every one changing its hues* as it shifted its place in the ever-forming, ever-growing, continually-shifting vault; and as the light and the colour grew and waxed and rose and swelled, Miss Mary thought, 'What would mortal crowds give to see all this mysterious glory?'

As the thronging concourse neared the centre of the square, a mighty dome seemed to descend from above, meeting massive rows of columns and entablatures rising from beneath; and any one who has seen the sea on fire in a calm summer's evening, when every splash throws up hundreds of glowing sparklings, and the dip of an oar or the motion of the boat makes flashes of lambent flame, or undulating serpents of tortuous living light, will have a slight sort of a notion of what this mighty pavilion

must have been, when I say that it looked as if constructed of the mimic fires of the sea

Under this amazing cover a pause was made, not to receive tiresome, wordy addresses and to return stupid, nonsensical replies—the Fairy Welcome and Reception wasn't managed in that way,—but myriads of fairies, all fair and gay and glorious like nature-painted butterflies, gemmy beetles, dazzling humming-birds, arranged themselves in a second or two into glowing arches, with WELCOME under, WELCOME over, WELCOME around, WELCOME on the ground, WELCOME in the air, WELCOME diffused everywhere, so that everything above, below, within, without, encircling and all-enfolding, breathed and quickened and put life into WELCOME, and yet again WELCOME, while every group in every formation of the gracious growth around, with a sweet, penetrating, bewitching music, uttered the word, chanted the word, sang the word, now singly, now in unison, now in harmony, until it seemed that, in that world at least, 'Welcome' was the one thought in every breast, the one word in every mouth, the one sentiment in every consciousness.

Well, the glory and the beauty and the sweetness and the music of the Reception had to pass, of course, but passed away only as sweet sounds and sweet feelings and sweet raptures do—not in forgetfulness, cessation, and death, but in memories and recallings almost as sweet though fainter far, as

the just-past being of them; and then, as the gladsome host drew near the Palace of Domes and Pinnacles, the fairies that had fashioned and constituted and chanted the welcome were seen in hovering clouds, like snow descending in filmy flakes, but stopping midway in its soft, noiseless, graceful falling; each separate one taking the form of a winged fish, and each fish taking its place, and maintaining it with palpitating wings, gleaming and glistening with such colours as only dolphins, and two or three other painted fish known by mortals can show; the fashion of the whole clustering host being that of a glorious wedding pavilion. Mortals have their triumphal arches, and arches of welcome; but the fairies here had their Wedding Arch, and as the Prince and his lovely little Bride began to pass under it, in order to enter into the Palace of Domes and Pinnacles, the fairies who constituted the arch, with their graceful, flexuous forms, as gay in tint and hue as glorious in beauty, all of them began to shower — not vulgar rice, the plague and pest of mortal weddings, but clouds of little, glimmering, tint-changing globules — eggs they might have been called; for as they fell they hatched, rather than broke or burst, into little pale, lambent jets of many-coloured, flame-seeming brightness, which gathered themselves into stars or globes or flashes or streamers, and then scattered again in a lovely luminous cloud; then sundered to dance fantastic dances before and

around the princely couple and the noblest of the court; or to sit like gems on their garments and robes and caps of estate, now whirling round like wheels of pink-hued flame now grouping together like a massive column composed of tongues of fire, and finally investing the entering couple with an impenetrable surrounding of mystic splendour as they passed within the hall spread for the marriage banquet.

And then—when the blast of a hundred fairy trumpets announced that the Prince of the Faeries of the Water-under-the-Earth and his bride had taken their seats at the high table, and all the great ones of the two courts were honourably and duly arranged, and the lesser faeries, one and one a Water-under-the-Earth Fairy and an Above-the-Earth Fairy alternately, had taken their allotted seats—a second short, lively flourish from the trumpets announced a thing of another nature. The Palace of Domes and Pinnacles began to move bodily with a slow, progressive motion, and with a cadence marked by short, sharp trumpet-notes—and before long, Mary's wonder-struck eyes perceived that the waters they were traversing were no longer the waters they had passed through in their dining hall skiff, but the waters of a rugged ocean. The great branching red corals were there, and the broad-headed rounded, white corals also. The wreathed and twisted stems of giant seaweeds, with their

spreading, ribbony streamers, green and gold and bronze and silver all intermixed ; rocks of giant size, covered with sea anemones, some as big as a spread umbrella, some hardly so large as a silver three-pence, but of all colours, all fashions, all manners ; few only alike, but all gloriously beautiful. And there were gems and jewels and precious stones of every conceivable kind and lustre, and crystals and spars and pearly knops, all gleaming, glancing, glittering, or steadily shining. And the shells—oh ! the shells ! Mary clapped her hands to see so many, and so large, and so gorgeously painted.

And so they passed on and on, and still on, when presently there came another loud fanfaron of the trumpets, and the gentle motion ceased. Now that Mary had time to look about again, she could see through the crystal-clear walls of the palace-hall in which, as you remember, the company was grouped. She saw thousands and thousands of fishes of all sizes, and shapes, and colours, and fashions, and makes, swimming round and round, and over and under, every one moving in that strange, gliding, graceful, easy way we see fishes moving in, in the great tanks of an aquarium in mortals' land ; and some were so big, and others so strange, and others so funny-looking, and others with such great mouths, that Mary was half inclined to laugh, and the other half to cry out with fear.

But the Fairy Princess soon cheered her up, for

she bade her notice that there were no sharks, nor tiger-fish, nor wolf-fish, nor sea-dragons, nor devil-fish, nor any fish at all of the cruel, voracious, destructive sorts: none such were allowed there, she said: and besides that, if Miss Mary looked she would see that a great many among the crowd were not there for nothing. And Mary very nearly laughed outright when she saw what it was the fishes the Princess told her to look at were really and actually doing. For she remembered once, when she was reading that curious but rather sad story of 'Who killed Cock Robin?' on coming to the question 'Who caught his blood?' and the answer 'I, said the fish, in my little dish,' seeing the picture of the fish with what looked more like a plate than a dish, funnily held in his mouth. Now every one of these fish swimming around had got a dish in its mouth, and, when she looked more attentively, she saw there were things to eat in the dishes, and such things too! Any one, seeing how they came—brought, that is, by fishes that could swim as fast almost as the lightning can fly,—could easily understand how nice things, and things very good to eat indeed, and things from all the corners of the earth, yes, and from all the depths and secret places of the sea, and all the shy nooks and clefts of the rocks in the deep waters, could be brought there in a trice. And before Mary knew that it was to be done, or could be done, and much more how it could

be done, there were the dishes on the tables, all gold—no silver was so much as admitted,—and plates of mother-of-pearl, and everything else to match, spoons and knives and forks and goblets such as she would not have believed in, even if she had seen them, on the earth above. And



These fishes swimming around had got dishes in their mouths.

if there was a thing to eat or drink nicer than all the rest, that thing was on her plate or in her cup in a moment; and when she had eaten it or drunk it, straightway she wanted some more—for she did get so hungry with eating, and so thirsty with drinking, just as she had once before, you remember, at a fairy refreshment room; and every-

thing she got was still nicer and nicer and nicer ; and oh ! she did enjoy herself so, seeing all the beautiful fish frolicking about in the water all round, and coming and poking their noses up against the crystals walls, and nodding and winking at her ; and she was sure they *were* smiling and nodding to her, and she really did think, when she saw their mouths going in such a queer, good-natured, kindly sort of a way, that they were saying to her in their silent fish-tongue, 'Glad to see you here, Little One. Be sure to tell your friends above-the-earth that a dinner here is not half such a "fishy" thing as they are ready to fancy.' Miss Mary nodded and smiled in reply, and then all the fishes that had flattened their noses enough looking at her frisked and flourished and whirled and twirled in their pleasure, a hundred times more actively and intricately than a good skater cutting his own initials on the ice, or working the inside and outer edge both at the same time, or executing some other remarkable or impossible feat.

But even such an entertainment as this must come to an end sometime or other. There were no speeches made — fairies leave that dismal sort of pastime to sad, care-burdened, seldom-smiling mortals : but there were presents made, though by no means all to the Bride or Bridegroom ; and, stranger still, not one grudging one among them all, but all out of a pure heart and willingly, and

be so, and they were known to be so, and I am glad my
work is the same as my husband's.

I will tell you of all the wonderful things which
were done with me of course the Fairy on the
Fairy had many pretty things, and fair and precious
things, such as the Fairy of the Great and the
Fairy could not have. And then, for the
last of course, but many features the others were
not likely ever to have heard of. But there is only
one thing I shall try to tell you about with any
detail, because really both my time and my space
are getting short. And that one was the water-
clock the Fairy Aunt of the Crown Prince gave to
our lovely Fairy Princess, who was so kind to Miss
Mary, and let her see and examine it as closely as
she liked. It was not a clumsy thing like the
clepsydra, or water clock, the old Romans and some
others used to be so proud of in the old days;
but something much more creditable to the power
of invention than that.

It had to go in the Water-under-the-Earth, and
of course its works had to be contrived accordingly.
And they were so contrived. For they were all
alive and used to the water, and wanted the water
to live and move and work in. You remember
about Mr. Greenbeard's chain, don't you? And
Miss Mary's ring that was as big as a hoop, and
yet lessened itself so as to fit her slender finger as
if it was made so? Well, after the same manner all

the works of the water-clock turned and wheeled and revolved, and fitted and played, the one into the other, just like the parts of the snake-chain, only, of course, much more ingeniously and intricately. And as to the delicacy and beauty of them, why, for such a present between such Powers and Potentates, you may be sure they were a host of times more beautiful and lustrous than Mr Greenbeard's chain, and even that made Miss Mary wink, if she looked steadily at it.

And the clock was a 'striking clock' too. You may perhaps think that is impossible in the water, and especially such deep water as the Water-under-the-Earth. However, you can't have heard or read much, if you haven't heard of the bells of some holy old Abbey Church being stolen away from their proper church tower, and put on shipboard to be carried quite away, and then the ship getting wrecked before it got far (as was only fairly to be expected after such an act of sacrilege), and the bells being heard ringing and chiming, long and long afterwards, at the bottom of the sea, and especially in great storms or times of trouble and calamity. Why, I believe they tell that story about the old Abbey bells at Whitby, and who knows if the Bell Rock there is not called so after them?

But there is even another thing besides that. Did you never hear of the drum-fish, which, if you touch it as it lies in its tank, gives out a drumming

noise? And fancy a big one, a real big one, molested at the bottom of its pool in the sea, and what a booming noise it would be sure to give out! Well, the striking, at least the sounding part of this clock I am telling you about, was fashioned out of the 'tympanum' of just such a creature as that; and if you can fancy the melodious sound of a beautiful drawing-room clock striking, only a hundred times more melodious, that will give a faint sort of a notion of the sweet sound of the striking of this water-clock that was given to the Princess.

And there's another thing I will tell you about it, if you will promise not to tell any tiresome, bothering, howe-digging archæologist, and that is what she did with it, and where it is now, and what ninnies the people are, who hear it sometimes as they cross the Park not far from the Folly Hill, and say it is the big guns at Redcar, or thunder, or something else equally nonsensical. It is set in a huge crystal vase of water such as it was made to go in, at a place just twenty-seven yards south-east and by north of the mended crack (that the bees and the stray sunbeams got in at) at the Folly Hill; only, of course, quite low down below the surface of the ground. And it was still going quite beautifully the very last time Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary paid a visit to their Fairy friends who dwell there.

Well, I haven't time to tell you about any other

of those beautiful presents, or anything else indeed, except that when the last had been lovingly exchanged, the return journey of the Palace of Domes and Pinnacles began.

Did you ever see the fountains of brightly coloured water play at some Exhibition or other in London, or anywhere else? Red and blue and orange and green and rose and carmine, mauve, tawny, gold, all colours, in great jets and sheets, rising and rising, and then turning over in arches, and falling, and then up again, and down once more, in continuous and tireless beauty and glory? Well, as the Palace of Domes and Pinnacles moved with its pleasant, easy, gently undulating motion, there were volumes of coloured waters, far more gorgeous than those of mortal exhibitions, playing higher and farther than mortal contriver ever dreamed of, and taking all sorts of wonderful and striking and graceful forms, till, at last, the Palace reached the place it had started from. Then the fairy procession formed again, and swept graciously along till it came to the place where they had left their skiffs, each one of them. And every one's skiff came straight to its passenger, and took him or her in. And then it changed its shape into what you may call the fashion of a water balloon, and when every one was ready, up they all darted, and before Miss Mary could do more than wink three times, they were just where they had originally started from. A second or two later

and they were on the bank. The skiffs began to change themselves back again into primroses; the Fairies, each for her or himself, began to fasten the primroses to their stalks again; and when Miss Mary tried to 'un-pluck' hers, in just the same way, the flower flew back to the stalk with quite a whisk, and joined on with a loud crack. And she rubbed her eyes, and lo! it was nothing but the sound of Lucius's gun as he shot another rabbit!



IX

MRS. DRAKE IS INTERESTED IN MAKING AN
ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY AND COUNTRY
OF THE UNITED STATES.

WHAT a lovely day this was for me,
I say. I was out for a walk in the
park, and I was very happy.

I was very happy and I was very
happy.

I was very happy and I was very
happy. I was very happy and I was
very happy. I was very happy and I
was very happy.

I was very happy and I was very
happy. I was very happy and I was
very happy. I was very happy and I
was very happy.

'Why, what else could they have been made by?' asked Miss Mary rather scoffingly; 'besides, they were exactly like the prints of rabbits' feet.'

However, the old gentleman did not seem to be quite persuaded by Miss Mary's logic, and asked her if she was quite sure about the marks being 'exactly like the prints of rabbits' feet,' and whether she could mark out an imitation rabbit's footprint with his stick on the sandy bit of the path they were walking along.

Miss Mary took the stick, giving out a rather sharp little 'Psha!' as she did so: and then she made several marks in the sand, which did not seem to grow much more like a rabbit-track as she went on with her undertaking. The old gentleman laughed a little, and asked her 'How many legs her rabbit had?' and 'Whether it made queer marks across its track with its tail?'

Miss Mary said 'Psha!' again, but rather more crustily than before; and then making quite a lot of for-nothing-in-particular sort of marks, she threw the stick down on to the ground, saying, 'I don't think you can do it any better than I can! Now try if you can.'

Mr. Greenbeard meekly suggested that she had not made it easy for him to do as she said, by throwing his stick away, and leaving him, with his poor old back as stiff as stiff (as she very well knew), to

stoop down and pick it up again so that he might do her bidding.

'Psha!' said Miss Mary again. But she picked up the stick, and put it into his hand, only with the knob end downwards.

'Thanks, Mary,' he said. 'I am glad you have a little sense come back to you!'

Miss Mary did not the least know what he meant, but thought he only meant to tease her, or at the least to chaff her, and so all she said was 'Psha!' for the fourth time.

But she opened her eyes and not her mouth when she saw the old gentleman holding the stick just as she gave it to him—that is, with the knob end downwards, and touching the smooth sandy place—and then proceed to make two roundish marks not exactly even with one another, and three or four inches apart, and then two more behind one another, and about the same distance behind the first two and between one another. And then, when he had made them of the proper depth, and taken a little pains in shaping them, and especially the two hinder ones, he turned to his little friend and said—

'There, Mary, that is fairly like the track left by a rabbit as it moves along when in no great hurry. When it is running fast, there is a much greater distance between the prints of the fore feet and those of the hind ones. Were those footmarks you saw this morning like these?'

But Miss Mary only kept her mouth very tight shut ; for she did not see the fun of admitting that she hadn't known exactly what a rabbit's trace was like, and still more that the tracks she had seen were not the least like what the old gentleman had marked so clearly on the soft sandy surface.

Mr. Greenbeard, however, was pretty sure she would not keep her mouth shut very long: particularly when he went on to tell her, what he was well able to tell her, about the footprints which had given occasion to this little passage of arms between them. So he resumed—

'Mary, I fancy I know what those traces were that you and I saw in the heavy dew this morning. For I noticed them rather more closely than you did ; and I thought I could make a pretty good guess as to what they were, and who had made them too.'

But still Miss Mary kept silence, and said never a word.

So Mr. Greenbeard just put his stick the right end downwards, and said, 'Oh, it is such a nice morning, now the sun has got so well up in the heavens, and has dried all that dew up so quickly. Suppose we take a walk, Mary, and look for birds' nests.'

'Poh!' said Miss Mary, 'there are no birds' nests of your kind. And you could have stopped now to pick up your stick if you had

liked. And you would, too, if there had been another dwarf's cave to ferret out. But you only wanted to make me pick it up for you. And then you chaffed me and teased me. And I won't go a step with you before you tell me more about those tracks and traces that did look so funny and strange this morning.'

Mr. Greenbeard smiled a little, but only said, 'But you won't believe a word, Mary, if I tell you exactly what I saw, or thought I saw, nor yet when I tell you what I thought about it all.'

Miss Mary was not inclined to give in so far as to say that she would altogether accept her old friend's statements, or his imaginings either. All the same, she was in the mind to have him tell her everything there was to tell, without thinking that the more she heard the more she would want to hear.

'Well, Mary,' the old gentleman began, 'I noticed those footmarks—for they were footmarks—rather closely this morning; and you must remember that I went a good deal closer to them than you did. And what I saw were not rabbit-tracks at all, nor anything like them. They were much more like the marks that would have been made by babies' feet, if babies could have walked and danced and hopped about like birds, as some of the creatures that walked and danced on those baby feet certainly had done.'

'Psha!' said Miss Mary.

'And another thing I remarked,' continued the old

gentleman, without noticing her interjection, 'was that some of these little feet had sandals on, and some were quite bare - and these I thought the prettiest of all, - and some had the most beautifully fashioned slippers or dancing-shoes on.'

'Psha!' said Miss Mary.

'And what I think,' continued Mr. Greenbeak, 'is that they were the footprints left by the Fairy host.'

'Psha!' said Miss Mary, more sharply than ever. 'There are no fairies. - I don't believe there ever were any fairies. - It's all silly stories!'

'But oh, Mary, don't you remember Little Red Riding hood, and the nasty greedy old wolf - -'

'There never was a Red Riding hood, and there never was a wolf that could talk. - It's all silly stories together.'

'And don't you remember Cinderella, and the Fairy Godmother, and the glass slipper, and the coach, and the mice that were changed into horses, and all the rest of it?'

'No, I don't,' said Miss Mary. 'There never was a Cinderella, and there never was a pumpkin changed into a coach, and there never was a Fairy Godmother, and I don't believe in any of it all. - It's all silly stories together.'

'But I believe in it myself,' said Mary. 'I don't like to see you so sure of your own knowledge. - I don't like to see you so sure of your own knowledge. - I don't like to see you so sure of your own knowledge.'

'No, I don't believe a word of it. There never was a sparrow with a bow and arrow. How could there be?' asked Miss Mary with great scorn. 'You know it yourself, now, don't you?'

But Mr. Greenbeard only said, 'And the Fairy Princess, and all the bonny journeys and flights you have made, and the fairy feasts you have been to, and all the other things——'

'There ain't any Fairy Princess, and there ain't any Fairy Realm, and their ain't any——'

'Oh, come,' said Mr. Greenbeard, 'at this rate we shan't have any Mr. Greenbeard, nor any four-leaved clover, nor any Green Bridge, nor any Folly Hill, nor any Water-under-the-Earth, nor anything else left, except Miss Mary to say she does not believe——'

'Psha!' said Miss Mary.

Mr. Greenbeard laughed, but only said, 'Well, Mary, at least we might have our walk, and as you don't want to look for birds' nests to-day, let us go up the avenue a little way.'

So the pair set off on this limited expedition—rather soberly and seriously, if the truth is told: for one of the pair was not altogether content. But, as they went, Mr. Greenbeard picked up a very golden yellow leaf, one of many like it lying on the ground thereabouts, and showing it to his companion, said—

'Ah! one of the real golden leaves that I used to find, Mary, and you couldn't, you remember. And see what a lot of them there are!'

But Miss Mary only snatched it away and threw it scornfully down again. Just at that same moment, however, a little sort of whirlwind, such as is often seen catching up and twirling the fallen leaves about in the autumn, caught the discarded leaf and the others that were lying about there, and began to whirl them about in a very fantastic manner: only, Miss Mary did not notice (though the old gentleman did) it was only the real golden leaves, as he had called them a minute before, that were taken up: all the other and duller-coloured leaves were left lying unblown and unmoved. Presently, however, the wind seemed to cease blowing, and the leaves began to settle down on the ground again, but just close to where Miss Mary was walking. And you may guess how surprised she was when she saw them take the form of such a prettily-shaped coronet; or really, indeed, it was more like a crown. And the leaves did look so golden when they were all laid together like that!

'A funny freak of the wind, wasn't it, Mary?' said Mr. Greenbeard. 'Only I don't believe there was any wind to do it. There never was any wind. It's all silly stories about the wind. Eh, Mary?'

But Miss Mary could not take her eyes off the pretty golden crown, and only pushed out with her elbow when Mr. Greenbeard suggested continuing their walk and leaving those silly leaves behind them.

'They aren't silly leaves,' said Miss Mary, turning unwillingly away, and walking slowly on.

The next thing to notice was a long series of what looked like bleached willow leaves, all laid in rows, and having their white sides uppermost ; in the low sunlight, indeed, they looked like silver.

'Ah!' said Mr. Greenbeard, 'look at all those willow leaves!'

'They aren't willow leaves,' cried Miss Mary. 'There isn't a willow-tree growing anywhere near here. I do believe they are as much silver as those silly leaves of yours were gold, and more too. And yet, that crown did look very like gold,' she almost whispered to herself.

Just then another little gentle gust of wind came, and disturbed one of the silver leaves, so that it seemed to be carried up into the air, where it fluttered for a moment and then dropped upon Miss Mary's shoulder. Miss Mary was going to take it off very carefully, when she saw another of them begin to go up as the last had done, and then come down and drop on her other shoulder. In half a second, about a dozen more seemed to dance up into the air, and after circling about for a little space, these too descended upon Miss Mary's hat and different parts of her jacket. She looked round at Mr. Greenbeard, and you can fancy what a look of wonder there was in her eyes. But it was he who spoke first, and what he said was—

'What is that you have got on your finger, Mary?'

Miss Mary looked at her finger, and could not believe her eyes when she saw her ring on it. Certainly, one of the leaves had just brushed her hand as it danced up into the air: but that was only an accident, and might have happened to any one, of course. And so, without thinking the least what she was doing, she just turned the ring round as she had done those other times, and what do you think she saw? Just all the silver leaves on the green grass turning into rows and groups of lovely little Fairies! And then, she had to notice that there was a Fairy on each shoulder, and others just where the leaves had settled about her, as they came down from their pretty dance in the air. The next moment she heard a sweet, piping little voice saying at one ear, 'So you don't believe there are any fairies'; and another voice at the other ear laughingly saying, 'Nor yet that there ever were any!' And then the whitest and silveriest of them all as the leaves had laid on the ground, gradually growing in size and stature as she came out of the group who surrounded her, came in front of Miss Mary, and made her such a grand and graceful curtsy as had never been even imagined in mortal courts, adding, as she rose up again from her grand obeisance—

'so you don't believe there ever was any mother?'

But how am I to tell you what the Fairy God-mother was like? No doubt we have all seen



'So you don't believe there are any faeries.

pictures of her in story-books and fairy-tale books. And these pictures represented her as an old lady in short petticoats and a short cloak, and a queer hat with a sort of sugar-loaf top to it, and her hooked

nose almost meeting her crooked-up chin! And then, there was her wand too, which looked more like a straight stick cut out of the hedge and peeled by some idle school-boy than anything else. But this Fairy Godmother was not like that at all. If ever you saw a gray-haired elderly lady that everybody honoured and respected and cherished because she was so good and true and kind; that all the little children everywhere, and especially her own grandchildren, clustered round and clung to when they were well and happy, and crept to for comfort and help when they were sorry or sick, because they knew she was as kind and loving and sweet and good as she looked; and who looked as if her beautiful face was made of goodness and love, like what little ones think of as angels' faces;—well, this Fairy Godmother was like that. So sweet and beautiful to see! So kind and gracious and loving in every look and gesture! So gentle and attractive to a loving, trusting, innocent little child! Certainly she had a wand. But it was made of solid moonbeams threading large pearls, set every few inches along its length; and it was tipped at the upper end with a blazing diamond, that came down from the sun on purpose; and the lower end was pointed with a ray given by the brightest star in all the heavens.

dear little Miss Mary, when she saw this being looking so kindly at her, and heard

the sweet silvery voice saying, 'And so you don't believe there ever was any Fairy Godmother,' could not help going quite close to her and saying, 'But I believe in you, Fairy Lady!'

The Fairy Godmother smiled down upon her—for Miss Mary had become quite small by this time—and said, 'Ah! I think we must show you two or three other things to believe in to-day. Come here, Cinderella!' And immediately the loveliest young lady you ever saw, or even fancied, was standing by the Fairy Godmother's side, and asking her what she had got for her to do?

'Oh!' said the dear old fairy, 'here is a little mortal here who does not believe there ever was a Cinderella!'

'Not believe in ME,' cried Cinderella, 'but I'll soon convince her.' And then she turned to Miss Mary and gave her the sweetest and warmest kiss she had ever had from anybody in the world, except her own dear mother, and one or two other home bodies; and whispered to her, with her lovely red lips almost touching her still, 'Don't you believe in me now, Mary?'

Mary kissed her back; and then she gave her another kiss, just because she couldn't help it. And that was all the answer she gave her. The next moment Cinderella said to her, 'See my glass slipper! I do believe it would fit you.' And so it did: exactly too. 'Oh! but I must not let my prince



silly stories?' And such lovely smile-pearls fell from her lips as she spoke.

But Miss Mary made nothing of them at all. All she could think of was that it was the dear Princess herself, and that she was not angry with her for what she had said ; and so before she knew what she was doing she caught the Princess's hand and gave it three good kisses.

The Princess was not displeased even with this freedom and familiarity. On the contrary, she seemed rather pleased than not. Only she turned to the Fairy Godmother, saying, 'I think she believes in me a little just now: but we must try and show her two or three other things yet, and take away her unbelief that way. And then she turned to Mary and said, 'Mary, do you think "seeing is believing"?''

But Miss Mary did not quite feel sure that seeing *was* believing, and so all she said was that she would like to try the experience of seeing what there was to see, and believing it when she had seen it. This made the Fairy Godmother say, 'I think I heard her say she did not believe the "Tragical story of Cock Robin." Suppose we show her both the Sparrow and the Robin: and,' added she to Miss Mary herself, 'they won't be stuffed birds—you need not think that. They will be the real archer-bird and his real victim.'

So a fairy officer of the Court was sent to ask

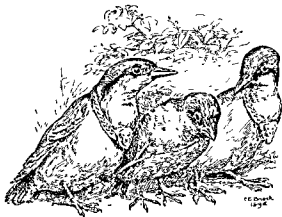
Cock Robin to attend, and another of less dignity to order the Sparrow to be brought. Miss Mary did not understand why one should be invited, and the other ordered to be brought, as if he couldn't have come by himself. She did not like to ask, but the Fairy Princess saw she was puzzled, and said to her in the way of explanation—

‘ You see, Little One, Cock Robin is in our Fairy Paradise for good birds, together with the robins who were kind to the “ Babes in the Wood ” ; the cross-bills that tried to pull the cruel nails out of the Cross, and got all bloodied through it ; the uncomplaining little birds that feed the marauding young cuckoos in their nests ; the kind little birds that gave some of their food to their sick or cage-confined fellows ; and so forth. And he is very happy there, as you will see, when he comes. But the Sparrow is in the Penitentiary for wicked birds that were not kind and good to others.’

She had hardly done speaking when in came Cock Robin, with such a beautiful red vest on, and a silver belt across his breast, and the shaft end of a silver arrow fixed to it on one side, and the point end at the other, looking just as if it went through him. And he was so tame and confiding that he hopped on to Miss Mary's finger the moment he saw her, and looked up into her eye, and all but asked her to stroke his head and back. But Miss Mary could not notice him any more just then, because the

Sparrow was brought in by two Nuthatches in blue and gold, whose strong, sharp, hard beaks would soon have settled him if he had tried to resist or be unruly.

'Who killed Cock Robin?' asked a very stern—that is, for a fairy—a very stern voice.



The Sparrow was brought in by two Nuthatches.

'I,' said the Sparrow, 'with my bow and arrow', but you would not have known it for the pert, bold, impudent Sparrow's voice: and well might it be low, and cheepy, and meek, and subdued. For there, fastened on his back, was the very image of the Robin he had shot from behind, with the cruel, treacherous arrow piercing it through; and his feathers all

rumpled, and his impudence all gone, and a look as if he thought there was a cat under every bush, ready to spring out upon him, and himself so burdened that he could not even try to escape. And then he tried to chirp out how sorry he was; but his guards snubbed him, and bade him hold his noise, and not be a hypocrite as well as a ruffian. But the sight made Cock Robin look very sad. He was sorry to see his old foe with his spirit, as well as his bow, broken.

But Miss Mary could not bring herself to pity him, even though Cock Robin hopped off her finger on to her shoulder, and began to sing the prettiest little song quite close to her ear, telling her what good friends he was now with Miss Jenny Wren, with whom many folks were cross, and called her a saucy little 'bold-faced jig,' because she had all but jilted him, and hurt his heart more than the Sparrow had hurt his body.

Miss Mary was a little shaken by this; but when she saw Miss Wren come in and take Cock Robin by the pinion, and flit off with him, telling him that 'when he had finished all his song,' she hoped he'd 'straight begin again,' she began to think there was a good deal of reality about the matter after all.

Any remaining doubt, however, was removed a minute or two later, for, happening to look up at a sound of very merry laughing which she heard some-

where near, Miss Mary saw quite a troop of children come dancing along ; and though she was a little shy, at first, at the thought of meeting so many little strangers, she hardly needed the Fairy Princess's assurance that they would have a very pleasant time together, for she seemed to recognise them one after another as quite old acquaintances—dear friends, indeed, that she was very fond of, and would be more than glad to meet at such a nice party as this seemed likely to be. There was the prettiest little girl, mostly in red, and with a short cloak with a hood to it, ready to slip over her head if it rained, or the weather turned cold ; and there was a bonny little chap, mostly in blue, and with a blue ribbon round his neck ; and there was a little pair, almost baby boy and girl, with lovely autumn-coloured leaves, red and golden and russet, and crimson and pale red and coppery brown, all about their hair and their sleeves and their frocks—Miss Mary thought she had never seen children's dresses so prettily decked before ; and there was a little shepherdess, with nine sheep, and the prettiest little crook ; and a shy frightened-looking little lassie with a great, straggly-looking spider at her side, quite tame and not at all frightful to look at ; and a valiant-looking little fellow of a champion , and a great many more whom it would take me much too long to have to describe, and indeed even to name. And they all came flocking round Miss Mary ; and the little girl in red

(who had a basket on her arm, I ought to have told you before) was the first to come quite close, and to kiss Miss Mary. And Miss Mary kissed her back again, and seemed so pleased to see her, for she knew her directly and called her Little Red Riding-hood; and she joked Little Bo-peep, and counted her sheep, and pretended to be very particular in looking if they had 'brought home their tails behind them.' But she didn't the least like the look of the spider, with his long sprawly legs; and when he offered to bring his stool and 'sit down beside her,' she got to the other side of the Fairy Godmother in a moment.

I am afraid both the Fairy Princess and the Fairy Godmother laughed a little sllily at her; and one of them asked her if she did not 'believe there were any spiders.' But it was very certain she believed in that one; and though he did all sorts of clever and amusing tricks—climbing up ropes that seemed to go up to heaven almost, letting himself drop from a vast height and stopping himself quite suddenly and easily when he was all but coming on to the ground with a great bang; scrambling along from one fine thread to another that Mary could not even see, and going all about high over their heads in a way that seemed so strange, and yet to him so easy and graceful—still, she could not get over her apprehension of him. But she wanted to cover the baby-children (with their pretty leafy clothing) with her own warm cloak, for they looked so cold, she said, and she didn't like them

to have nothing warmer than leaves to cover them, however beautiful such leaves might be.

But there was quite a flock of Robins all fluttering about in a moment, and the chief one among them all told her in the sweetest little song that that was *THEIR* business; and hers was to tell the Babes how she, and all the other children she knew, loved the Robins for what they had done, and how glad they would have been themselves, if they had been old enough and big enough and strong enough, to have done the same, and a good deal more besides, to help them.

But the Robins hadn't quite got all this said, when three sweet little blasts on such a mellow little horn were heard. It was the Little Boy Blue, blowing up in his horn—

'The Sheep's in the meadow, the Cow's in the corn!'

And you should have seen the scamper among all these children—even Cinderella herself running off with them, but principally, I think, to pick up the Babes if they fell—just to put the Sheep right and get the Cow out of the corn. And when this was done, they were so out of breath with running and laughing and making up the hedge to keep the sheep right, and scolding the Cow when she lashed out with her tail and flisked them in the face, that they had no strength to walk back to where they had left the Fairy Princess and Fairy Godmother.

And then, what do you think happened? The Cow herself came and knelt down close to them, and asked them to get on her back! And the more that got on the longer her back grew; and when she began to move, the ride was so pleasant and soothing



The more that got on the longer her back grew.

they began to feel quite sleepy. The Little Boy Blue thought that would not do at all: it would be losing some of the sun; and he was quite sure he knew a better way than that. There was Cinderella's Prince looking on, with nothing particular to do, and if he blew strongly enough—and he surely was big enough to do it—into his (Boy Blue's) horn, it would

waft any of them up where they wanted to get to without any trouble at all. But Little Miss Riding-hood thought her tame Wolf would be better than that, and some of them could ride on his back; while Miss Muffit considered that her Spider's long legs would beat both the Cow and the Wolf, and not be so flighty, quite, as the air-trip from the horn. But Miss Mary liked the Wolf even less than the Spider, and said she had much rather walk. But Cinderella would not allow that, and when Red Riding-hood whistled for her Wolf, Miss Mary quite clung to her for safety; and the issue was that when the coach that had once been a pumpkin, and the horses, eight of them, that had been mice, and the coachman (who still wore the fierce whiskers which had distinguished him in his earlier days) drove up, Miss Mary jumped in so willingly and so quickly that she showed quite plainly she believed very much indeed in Miss Riding-hood's Wolf, but not the least that he was a wolf which no longer had a disposition to dine and sup on little girls.

Well, they soon got back to where the Fairy Princess and the Fairy Godmother were still standing: some by one means of conveyance and some by another. The Babes had come up in a pair of panniers which the Cow had kindly fashioned for them—as they were so very sleepy—with the help of her own ears; and the Little Boy Blue and Jack the Giant-killer, who was afraid of nothing, had got

themselves thrown up and wafted through the air out of Little Boy Blue's horn. And it was curious to see how they kept turning somersaults in the air all the way along, just like the clowns at the Circus or the Pantomime, when they jump up and turn over a time or two before they reach the ground again. But when the Spider came scrabbling along, and the Wolf came cantering up, Miss Mary got close up to the Fairy Godmother, and laid hold of her hand, as much as to say, 'Oh! do take care of me, Godmother.'

But it did not seem that there was much danger, for the Wolf was as harmless as a kitten, and almost as playful; and even Mary laughed a little when she saw him running round and round after his own bushy tail, or playing leapfrog with Little Bo-peep's sheep, or tumbling head over heels like an acrobat, or pretending to be afraid of the Babes or their Robins. But she could not attend to his antics long, for the Fairy Godmother asked her what she had done with Mr. Greenbeard—and I am really very sorry to have to tell you that she had forgotten the poor old gentleman altogether, and had not even the least notion what had become of him. She had not seen him ever since she had been reminded by him of her ring, and then had recognised the Fairies on her shoulders and round about. As you may suppose, she was more than a little anxious at missing him. This was far worse than that time when she went off for a drive with the Princess in the Kingfisher-car, for then

she knew that he was sitting quietly in the chair which had been pointed out for his use - but now he was gone, lost altogether, and she couldn't even imagine when or where or how. The Fairy God-mother saw she was quite troubled, and soon told



In the midst of a throng of the queerest looking creatures.

her not to be uneasy : for Mr. Greenbeard was gone a journey, rather a difficult and rather a distant one, certainly : but she, Mary, had been to the Water-under-the-Earth with him, and she knew too that he had been up to the Star-canopy, and no harm had befallen him ; and now he had gone on an errand to the Centre of the Earth ; and he would have a



X

HOW AND WHY MR. GREENBEARD WENT TO
THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH AND ELSE
WHERE; AND HOW MISS MARY HELPED,
AND CAME TO BID FAREWELL TO 'FAIRY-
LAND'

AS may be supposed, Miss Mary was not a little surprised, and perhaps a little discomposed, at seeing her old friend in such a place and with such surroundings and companions. In the Middle of the Earth! And with such quaint-looking gnomes and elves hovering or flitting or speeding all about him! And how could he have got there? And whatever could he have gone for? And have gone too without her having so much as a hint of his going, or being likely to go, either! Altogether, she was bewildered, and I think it was no great wonder that she was

So you will not think it very remarkable that she should have shown some signs of perplexity, or that the Fairy Godmother should have observed it.

'Well, Little One,' said the kind old fairy lady, 'as you are a little disturbed at seeing your old friend at such a far distance away. But, after all, it is only a little more than four thousand miles, you know; and that doesn't count for much with us, some of whom can "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," as easily as you little mortals can run upstairs. But I dare say you would like to know how such a journey was managed by him so quickly, and with such evident ease; and, besides that, how he should be so apparently unconcerned with that flittermouse crew all about him. Well, I will tell you all about it in a minute. But, first of all, Little One, how often have you turned your ring round to-day?'

'Only once, Godmother,' and then Miss Mary flushed up quite red, to think she was speaking so familiarly to the Fairy Godmother—a fairy who could do such wonderful things all in a minute, without even seeming to think much about the matter, and, much more, making any trouble about it.

'Yes, that's right, Little One: call me Godmother. You can't give me a name I like better. But about the ring, you know. You have turned it round once on your finger, you say. Now turn it round again

and tell me what you see. Look at Cinderella and Little Red Riding-hood, for instance.'

Miss Mary did as she was told, both as to the ring and the use of her eyes. But her tongue was not so ready to tell what she saw as the eyes to note. Indeed, for a moment or two, she was too much amazed to speak: for instead of one Cinderella and one Little Miss Riding-hood she saw three Cinderellas and as many Riding-hoods!

Without seeming to notice her astonishment, the Fairy Grandmother said to her, 'Now turn your ring round once more.' And when Miss Mary had done so, her amazement was greater than ever: for now Cinderellas and Red Riding-hoods were ringing her all round, hand joined in hand, and dancing a dance that seemed to make her almost feel giddy, so quickly and so merrily did they frolic around her.

'Now turn it another time,' said the old fairy to her: and this time there was only one Cinderella and one Little Red Riding-hood; but, besides them, there were Miss Muffit and Little Boy Blue, Jack the Giant-killer and Jack with the Beanstalk (which, miles long as we know it was, was twined all round him, and yet never hindered either him or his movements a bit), Jack the Giant-crusher and his famous staff, the Princess and the three Bears (each with its chair mended as good as new), the Sleeping Beauty and the bonny young Prince that woke her with a kiss, Prince Fortunatus, the White Hind, the Twelve

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again

it was not that her eyes grew dim. What actually was happening was that all the hundreds and hundreds of forms and figures and shapes grouped all round her were growing dim and indistinct, and by the time she had turned her ring round fully, and for the sixth time, every shape and figure had gone, having disappeared utterly; and she and the Fairy Godmother were left there alone. And even that was not quite all: for they themselves seemed to be made of something that could be seen through. Miss Mary could see the floor beneath her own feet—I mean that she saw it through her feet as if they had been made of glass; and when she took hold of her frock with her hand, as if to try whether she could really feel it—for it did seem to her as if there was nothing to touch—she could see the colour and texture of the material through the flesh of her hand!

I am sure I need not say that this was more than merely startling. To become aware all at once that she, and her companion too, were not only in the very centre and midst of nothing, and of nothing but nothing—at least as far as her senses of sight and touch and hearing could testify,—but that she herself was as transparent as a plate-glass window, was certainly a little trying; and she rather fidgeted over the thought, ‘Suppose she were told to turn the ring round another time yet, and that time the seventh time—whatever would happen then? Would

"I must be a clown," said she, "if you can think that I have been thoroughly acquainted with all the tricks of these women that do the work of the world for us poor mortals. And if it should happen that they were only quackery, what then would become of us?"

She had not had just the rich heretofore habit of thought, and her principles were getting jumbled over her head, when the Fairy Godmother left her for her own way. Now, I don't know what the thing signified, but she was sure.

Many a poor thought of not being as she was before, and she must be admitted that she led it with much misgiving, and a little more slowly than usual. And she even began to tremble a little when, having just had turned her ring a number of ghastly looking stones, like the poor ghosts of great big white moths, began to be seen flitting no more only about her in the empty space around. Indeed, I think it was by reason of the great start she gave in seeing herself in the midst of such mystery as looking, doubtful, and stirring apparatus that the last part of the ring-turning was done much more quickly than the first part, or that, indeed, she had intended. But, the moment the full turning had been accomplished, there she was—not alone, to be sure, or with only the unsubstantial shape of the Fairy Godmother near her, for there was the Fairy Princess and the Fairy High Chamberlain, and the Fairy Lords and Ladies, and many another that she knew very well, but there she was

besides all these, in the midst of a series of the strangest white-winged, restless objects or beings—she didn't know what they were—she had ever seen or imagined, flitting about like butterflies in the sunshine, or hovering here and there as butterflies do over a beautiful, sweet-scented flower. Each of them had two wings, pearly-looking, diaphanous, shimmering, like sheets of gossamer with the early dew on it, lightened up by the level rays of the rising sun. The wings were as soft and soundless as the wings of the owl as it flies in the gloaming, or the light, velvety web-pinions of the silent flittermouse. But these wings had no bodies—to speak truly about them—to bear along. At least, it did not seem right to call what they did actually bear along by the name of 'bodies.' For the first pair of wings that came and hovered close enough to Miss Mary, and long enough for her wonder-stricken eyes to make anything at all of it, was only bearing a pair of very red, sweet-looking lips, which showed for all the world as if they wanted to give her a kiss, and to get another kiss back. Then came another pair of wings, and their burden was a lovely pair of bright, smiling, merry-looking blue eyes. Next, there was a couple of these wing-borne objects, the one a pair of ears, which looked as if they could beat even Fine-car's wonderful quickness of hearing, and the other a pair of hands, the prettiest, delicatest, softest, cleverest hands Mary had ever seen before. Then came pairs

seemed to be here and there and everywhere; and it did look so uncanny to see the lips moving as if talking eagerly and very fast, and yet hear no sound, or to notice the ears as quick and mobile as a hare's in the field or wood, and the eyes as sharp and quick-glancing as a squirrel's or a fox's. And Mary was quite sure too that there was some mystery about it all, as well as a common understanding between the several winged objects

And so there was really, both the one and the other; and, besides that, she soon came to the perception that her friends the Fairies were beginning to be a little disquieted by these mysterious presences and their proceedings. And the way they came to be better informed about it all was this

Old Mr Greenbeard (as we know was quite an everyday sort of thing with him) had his remarkable chain with him, and also the notable pocket-tube with that wonderful powder in it, which he had found so useful in the course of the endeavours made to outmanœuvre the mischief-meaning Dwarf of the well on the Church bank. And when he had observed that Miss Mary was so pleasantly occupied, making personal acquaintance with so many and such pleasant companions, he drew off by himself a little, and fell into one of his queer mooning fits, wherein he became so much taken up with his own thoughts as to forget other things, and sometimes even to get forgotten himself

Greenbeard himself could do to see them distinctly. But he soon saw enough to make him sure that these shapes, and the winged lips and ears and eyes, were all easily perceptible by each other, and were connected or banded together in some strange and not easily recognisable sort of manner, and the evident secrecy of it all made him very suspicious indeed that it could be for no good end. So he managed to make the Lord Chamberlain understand that he had better retire altogether from the scene, and leave him alone with these quaint visitors, who did not so much as suspect even that he was there. And as soon as ever the old Fairy Lord was gone, he began to perceive that if he had been pretty wide awake in the matter of that uncanny old Dwarf, there was quite equally good reason for him to keep himself from dreaming, or nodding, or drowsiness at the present time. For there was a very pretty plot hatching—nay, all but hatched outright—against these kindly fairies.

Those eyes and ears, and lips and hands, and feet and legs, were all busy about the same end and object—I mean spying out everything there was to spy, the ways of the Fairies, the places they went to, the dwellings they lived in, the haunts they frequented, their storehouses and treasuries, their jewel-breederies, their means and modes of making or utilising this wonderful material or that—sunbeams, lightning, moonshine, what not, and all their other establish-

the same as he had seen the moment before, or whether they were altogether different.

But Mr. Greenbeard had not been left alone by the Lord Chamberlain very long before he got to know so much that he actually came to be almost scared. For the ghostly, shadowy forms about him became less and less uncertain, obscure, evanescent; and as they grew to be, so to speak, more substantial, he saw that there was no end to their numbers. But what disconcerted him most was that there was not one single perfect form or frame among them all. Each wanted some one member or feature, or pair of features. And it did seem uncanny to see one figure all right except its eyes, and another all there except its hands, and a third without ears, and another minus mouth, and so on.* And yet so it was; there was not one quite perfect. But was he quite right in saying so? No; he was wrong. He saw that there was one perfect form. No; wrong again! There were two perfect forms. No; wrong a third time! Three perfect forms were there. But all the rest wanted something—eyes, ears, nose, mouth, something. But these three—Mr. Greenbeard was certain they had not been different from the others in this particular at first. And how, possibly, could they have changed so? Presently he saw the explanation of this also. For the winged mouth and eyes and ears had not disappeared, but fitted themselves to the forms that they inhabited.

But I suppose you would like to know who and what this strange, mysterious, ill-intentioned crew were, and where they came from, and why they were planning such a crafty, wrongful incursion as this ; and I agree that it is only right you should know.

Well, you have all heard of that luckless, chilly, unhappy land where the great dreary ' Castle at the back of the North Wind ' is situated, and, at all events, all Yorkshire folks know about that more remote place still, spoken of as ' Aback o' beyont.' But there are not many who know about that dreary, desolate realm inhabited by the Fairies of the Land-the-Sun-turns-his-back-on ; where too the Moon's function is to bring darkness and not light ; where the trees are dead before they are grown, and the boughs snap and crack and fall if one but looks at them ; and the beasts and birds and fishes are mummies swathed in alternate bands of woven snow and darkness-that-makes-itself-felt ; where the water can't flow, nor waves be raised ; where hills and dales, mountains and valleys, are not, because all is a dismal, endless, lifeless expanse of flattest waste.

Nobody, surely, will wonder that even the fairies of such a realm were a ghostly, evanescent, moon-shiny sort of beings, or that having, by some means no one could explain or account for, heard of the joyous realm and happy existence of the fairies w

for a change of their own country and condition, and planned such a scheme of invasion and dispossession as Mr Greenbeard had been lucky enough to detect, and which he hastened at once to disclose to the Fairy Princess and her Councillors.

But the suddenness and nearness of the threatened danger! Only a short hour or two at most and the hosts of the enemy would be upon them! And then too, besides this, spies already in possession of all the information that could be useful! Nay, even worse than that, an organised body of enemies actually among them, and in reality masters of much that ought to have been the strength and the protection of the menaced Fairy people! What *was* to be done?

As you all see, there was not much time for consultation, and luckily there was no great occasion for it.

For, as in the malicious Dwarf's case, the Princess was quite equal to the emergency. Her store of the wisest and most wonderful lore, and the treasured secrets which had come down to her, as we already know, from her predecessors in the kingdom, were ready to be drawn upon, and with only the speaking
a few short sensible sentences—for the Fairy
was not quite like the Senate which sits in St.
's in respect of empty, wordy, windy speech-
—conclusions were come to and decisions
! at. Speed, secrecy, effective action, were of

course all necessary ; and with the aid of a wise policy all would, even yet, turn out well enough. And the Princess, who had revealed the secret of the Powder of Darkness, now disclosed the secrets of Speed, Secrecy, and Prompt Energy.

But for the same reason as led to Mr. Greenbeard's being made an agent in the obtaining of that wonderful powder, now he must be an agent in obtaining all that was known to them who knew those three great secrets. And the matters that were wanted were the Oil of Very Stillness, the Shadow cast by the Invisible, the Flame of White Heat, and the Sublimate of Speed. And in order to obtain these he was to be despatched, accompanied as before when he soared upwards to the star canopy, to a place no less mysterious, and almost beyond the reach of imagination, than the Central Vault within the Earth.

But before he started on such an obscure as well as distant and adventurous expedition as this, he ventured to suggest to the High Chamberlain a certain device which the latter, without delay, communicated to the Princess with what might almost have been called a chuckle, if Fairies could ever be supposed to condescend to such trivialities. And the next moment an order was sent to the Keeper of the Stores of Spun Moonshine, and another to the Head of the Fairy Net Department, and almost before the car for Mr. Greenbeard's descent could be got ready for his and the Chamberlain's singular sort of journey,

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Stephen

into which sits in the
ly, windy speech

decisions

were of

a 'thunderbolt.' I remember when I was only a schoolboy finding one sometimes, and rubbing it hard against my sleeve or a flint stone, and I and my schoolfellows could always 'smell the thunder,' a sort of brimstone smell that was in it. And I have known people who, when their cattle were ill, used to scrape some of the thunderbolt into water and make the sick creatures drink it; and others I knew who said that these thunderbolts were good against witches and other mischief-doing beings. So that you may be sure that thunderbolts shot down from the skies in terrible storms, and sinking right down into the earth, nobody knows how deeply—and I have seen some which, as the learned geologists say, must have been found miles down below the surface of the earth,—would be sure to be quite the right sort of things to penetrate this earthly globe of ours. And really it was a big, long thunderbolt, such as are only found in Fairyland—I am afraid to say how big and how long and how sharp—Mr. Greenbeard and his fairy escort had to step into. But I am not afraid to tell you that the moment they were safe inside it, it began going down, down, DOWN, as gently as a lift in a big London hotel, and so swiftly that before Mr. Greenbeard had had his forty winks out—for the easy sinking motion made him feel so very, very sleepy—the sudden stoppage on reaching the great hollow hall in the centre of the globe woke him up with a considerable start.

The first thing he noticed when he recovered a little from his surprise—for, as you will easily imagine, he was a little discomposed by such a rapid passage with such a termination to it—was a number of shapes and figures, some flitting about from place to another and back again, some as if they could possibly be where they were, systematically engaged, which, with all his acquaintance with Fairy Realm and its inhabitants, and perplexed him in no slight degree. They had little tiny wings like budding some had fuller wings that folded up like the spotted Mary-chaffer's; and some had none far as could be seen. Some too had the looking faces, that made you laugh to look at, and some had such sweet lovely faces, that you felt ready to cry because you could not have such darlings. Some shone and glittered in motion; and some were inconspicuous, as if their fair face with a veil over it, or the mists of a haze. The Fairy Chamberlain saw Mr. Greenbeard's doubt and perplexity, and told him the names of the gnomes, the least bright among the dazzling ones were Flame-fays. 'Is there nothing else you see, enough to deserve noticing?' 'No, nothing but when Mr. Greenbeard noticed them, and wondered how they got there, and only thing to be noticed was that they were not there.'

was the great rod or shaft that ran through all the great hollow vault they were in, and about which and its fittings all these gnomes and fays were so busily occupied. For it was nothing less than the great shaft or axis on which, as everybody knows, the world turns round night and day, and the two ends of which are called the 'Poles.'

What surprised Mr. Greenbeard most of all, however, was its size. Like everybody else who only thinks of the bigness of the world, he had fancied that its axis must be a strangely thick, unbending shaft, a mile or two, or perhaps even miles, in thickness; but what he saw, though strong and massive no doubt, was nothing at all like that. It was thick, to be sure; but Mr. Greenbeard felt quite certain that if he and Miss Mary were to join hands they could easily manage to clasp it round. But it was so wonderfully disposed, and all its bearings so cannily managed, that there was no friction, no noise, no creaking, no difficulty of any sort anywhere. Of course there were wheels within wheels, which was not surprising, as we are always hearing that 'the world goes round upon wheels.' How else indeed should it go? And at such a wonderful speed too? But the more one thinks of it, the more one feels sure that there must be no end of wheels to help it go round so steadily and at such a rate, as well as that there must be a risk of a hitch now and then such as a stone or something dropping in among all

these wheels, and breaking out a cog or two, or deranging one of the smaller pinion-wheels, or some-thing of the same sort. And no doubt at all, I think, that may be the way that what we call earthquakes come about. The wheel machinery that Mr. Greenbeard saw all round gets a little deranged, and then comes a shock, or in at likely more than one shock, before the gnomes and fire-fays, whose business it is to see after such matters, can succeed in setting all to rights again.

The next thing which Mr. Greenbeard specially noticed was a sort of screw-shaped lattice-work tube—a kind of spiral staircase it looked like to him—seemingly going the whole length of the great shaft; and little glittering spots of light seemed to be passing up and down it continually, like bits of lightning-flashes, so quickly did they pass and re-pass. These, he was told, were the messengers on duty between the two poles and the middle of the earth, and that, in order to get two of the matters he was come for, he would have to make his passage to both of those places, either of them in due succession. Only the Flame of White Heat could be obtained where they now were, or at the Central Hall in the body of the globe.

Well, Mr. Greenbeard was ready to go anywhere, he said—'Only he thought Miss Mary might perhaps

be to be one of the party.'

'I' said the Lord Chamberlain, 'she's got her

part of the adventure to attend to above. And I daresay she'll like it quite as well as flitting up and down in these flying galleries. Come, let us be going. There's no time to spare! And first for the Oil of Stillness, which we shall get best at the boss of the North Pole, whence it is easiest sent to all the other places along the axis where it needs to be applied.'

The Fairy Nobleman then placed himself, taking Mr. Greenbeard by the hand, on a small raised platform which glowed like burnished steel, and in a twinkling they were inside the spiral tube, going up, up, UP, like lightning. At the very moment of starting the Lord Chamberlain put a signet ring on Mr. Greenbeard's middle finger of the left hand, which had a large gem set in it, the biggest and most glorious the old gentleman had ever seen, and then he showed him that it was hollow, and, besides that, opened and shut with a spring. This, he explained, was intended to hold the Oil of Stillness. Well, the fitting on of the ring and the explanations that had to be given were hardly finished before they were at the end of their flight. Poor Mr Greenbeard was quite bewildered and confused at the whirling and whizzing of all the host of friction wheels and all sorts of wheels, little and big, he found himself among; and he no longer wondered that many people were to be met with who thought the two poles themselves must be in a warm rather than a

very cold region. For he could not conceive of frost or cold in the neighbourhood of such a turmoil of rapid and incessant movement and rotation; and, besides that, he felt very glad when, with his ring properly charged, the Lord Chamberlain hurried him into their swift locomotive again.

They were as easily and quickly successful in the accomplishment of their trip in the other direction, and in obtaining what they wanted there; and now they had only to get what was required at the central storehouse, and, that done, make for the scene of action with all possible speed.

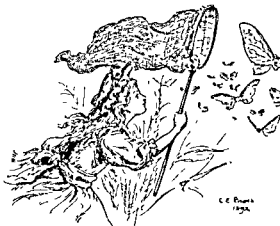
Emerging from their marvellous journey at the place from which they had started, they found the Fairy Princess, the Fairy Godmother, and Miss Mary all in a group together, and Miss Mary with such a strange-looking object in her hand. If you had met her in the world above carrying such a sort of thing in her hand, you would naturally have supposed that she was out for some sort of a Natural History expedition, and was intending to catch insects on an extensive scale, such as the mayflies the trout are so fond of, or moths or butterflies, or those active, loping grasshoppers that jump two or three yards at a time and never seem to get tired; and you would not have been the least surprised to see her running off and all about in such a pursuit. Only, perhaps, if you had met her with that particular net—for it must be a net, surely!—in her hand, and as she was in other

respects when Mr. Greenbeard set eyes upon her as he came back from his errand, you would still have felt not so very much enlightened. because in reality you would not have seen anything at all, neither herself nor her equipment. Her ring had been turned round seven times, don't you remember? And that not only enabled her to see things she could not otherwise have seen, but, besides that, made her so that she could not be seen herself by some other eyes besides those of ordinary mortals. But the thing she had got in hand at present was one which required even almost more than that, and Mr. Greenbeard's part too was like Mary's in that particular.

For besides the net-looking thing Miss Mary held in her hand there was a series of little piles or bundles lying in neat order, all of which, when looked at more closely—that is, by eyes which were qualified to see—were made of network too. The real fact was they were made (as we surely remember they were ordered to be) of the invisible twine supplied by the spun moonbeams. And it was the old gentleman's part to set these nets all round the precincts within which the intrusive fairies from the melancholy land mentioned above were known to be collected, and that done, or as soon as the nets were properly disposed, Miss Mary's own particular part was immediately to begin.

Helped by the fairy hands and fingers which had

been so busy fashioning the nets, Mr. Green was not long in effecting his share in the work. Miss Mary began her allotted portion. She was in business to spy out all the winged pairs of butterflies and lips, and catch them in her seeming business, and to hand them over to the Lord Chamberlain as they flitted about, and to hand them over to the Lord Chamberlain as they flitted about, and to hand them over to the Lord Chamberlain as they flitted about.



Miss Mary had grand sport.

She caught them to the Lord Chamberlain and the other gentleman, who only just touched them with the Shadow-cast-by-the-Invisible, and not so much as the ghost of a shadow of them remained—not even a shadow to be seen in the air.

of winged game, and enjoyed it very thoroughly. It was the winged ears, however, which gave her the most trouble, because with their quick sense of hearing they were alive at once when she came anywhere near them. But she made very short work with the rest; and once the eyes and ears and lips were secured, all the remainder of the winged crew were left for the Dragon-fly Dragoons to settle with, for they had now no captain and no guidance, and so they blundered into the invisible nets, and made all sorts of other silly mistakes in their helpless condition. In this way the Fairy Home was made secure within, all the spies and their leaders being so happily and completely disposed of.

But by this time the outside reinforcements were beginning to draw only too near. Flitting forward as quickly as the fairies themselves could—and we know that was pretty fast—a few thousand miles would soon be traversed: but the plans laid by the Princess and her Council were intended to stop them short, and turn them back in such a plight that they should not lightly venture on another expedition against the Fairy Realm. But how were these to be carried into execution? Well, I must try and explain.

If you had been on the spot to make your own observations, all you would have been able to notice was a long line of what seemed to be, what indeed really were, bits of dry stick, broken out of branches

that had *dropped off the trees*, separated into splinters only an inch or two long, but all laid in a long, long line. This had been like a game of play, just a bit of fun, to the faeries to do. Next, even if you had been there to see, you wouldn't have seen much of what went on, unless you had had a spray of the golden flowered, four leaved plant, and then you might have seen the Fairy Godmother with her grand staff and its blazing tip quickly touch each separate little short piece of stick with it, and though you wouldn't have seen a long line of grand carriages, like Cinderellas, all in a row as the sticks had been laid, you would have seen a whole array of cars, all with beetles harnessed to them of the same nature as those large churning ones that fly past you in the evening without your being able to see them, only fifty times as large. And, besides this, a fairy doing something to the wheels of each car -- for so it seemed -- and so it really was, moreover, become in point of fact they were making use of that wonderful old Mr. Woodcock had been to the North Pole for. Nothing else would have prepared those wheels for the speedy work they had to do. And next a road was seen to be laid on each separate car, and this done, the Godmother's wand was applied, and then at a nod from the Fairy Godmother what a lot of cars, hundreds of cars, were seen to be coming towards you. With wheels as

applied, they were hundreds of miles on their road before mere mortals could wink twice.

And then if you had been there to see, and had had very seeing eyes lent you for the purpose, so that you could have seen what was being done, you would have seen the dreary-looking, ghost-like fairies from the Land-outside-the-Sun's-rays coming on in their array just like those clouds of milky-blue-looking little *cphemeræ* which show more like clouds or columns of faint blue smoke flowing slowly on than anything else; and as the phantasmal host drew near to the line of cars, you would have seen all the big beetles hovering ever so high in the air above, like a dense threatening cloud, and a line of dazzling bright fire, running brighter and quicker all along the line of cars than a flash of lightning, so that it ran the whole length in less than a second, and the front troops of the ghost-like fairies dropping down shrivelled up and scorched helpless before the intolerable ardour of the Flame of White Heat. For that was what the cars had been charged with.

Well, the hinder ones pressed those in front onwards, and these, singed and scorched and shrivelled like moths at a strongly burning lamp, never got any farther forward. Presently intelligence reached the rear of what was going on in front; and then—Oh! the confusion and the rout!

And now it was the Beetles' turn to intervene. Down they came, all the hundreds on hundreds

to Miss Mary, 'Why would you go on growing older and bigger, Little One? Why couldn't you stay little, just a wee young girlie, and able to come to us every now and then still! But you are growing and growing, older and taller, and so it won't be possible for you to come to our world any longer, and this—we are all so, SO sorry—will be your last visit. But you mustn't forget us quite. And here is something to help you to remember us by.' And as she spoke, she took that beautiful coronet which Mary had seen, where there had been nothing but leaves at first, lying on the grass, and which had then lifted itself up on the Princess's head as she seemed to rise up out of the ground just before the Fairy Godmother appeared; and this coronet she put into Miss Mary's hands for her very own. And in a moment—Mary winked and rubbed her eyes, but could not think how it had happened so—there was no Princess, no Fairy Godmother, no Fairy Lords and Ladies any longer, only Mr. Greenbeard, with rather a quizzical look on his face and smile on his lips.


Miss Mary cried 'Psha!' very sharply. All the same, she looked at her hands, for she was sure she had the coronet safe in them. But all she had was a handful of mere leaves, some of them silvery, others golden in hue, and not a few of them with little round, bright, red objects upon them which she persisted had been fairy jewels, but which Mr. Greenbeard (rather nastily, as she thought, and I am sure we

of them, with a scolding done fit to read even the iron eyes of mortals carried by their thousands of shrouded wings, playing and havoc among the unnumbered, shade-like, scattered hosts of the awaiting hosts.

And then there was an end to this new peril to Miss Mary and her Fairy Friends.

There was, strange to say, rather a sad parting after this adventure. You would have expected (I am sure you would) that when Mr. Greenbeard and Miss Mary had been so helpful in such a wonderful manner to the just described, the Fairies would have made more of them than ever before. And really that was exactly what happened. If I tried all day long, and sat up all night too, trying to tell you of all the brightness and grandeur and glory that awaited the winners and conquerors in this strange conflict on their return to the beautiful and now once again peaceful Fairy Realm we have heard of so often and know about so well, it would still be all to no purpose. I could hardly even begin to describe you what I meant by a 'sad parting.' When it came to shaking hands—for the Princess herself, as well as all the Fairy Lords and Ladies, did actually shake hands with Miss Mary that day—the Princess was seen to have tears in her beautiful eyes, and her voice, sweeter and softer and fuller of more than mortal melody than ever, just trembled a little as she said

to Miss Mary, 'Why would you go on growing older and bigger, Little One? Why couldn't you stay little, just a wee young girlie, and able to come to us every now and then still! But you are growing and growing, older and taller, and so it won't be possible for you to come to our world any longer, and this—we are all so, SO sorry—will be your last visit. But you mustn't forget us quite. And here is something to help you to remember us by.' And as she spoke, she took that beautiful coronet which Mary had seen, where there had been nothing but leaves at first, lying on the grass, and which had then lifted itself up on the Princess's head as she seemed to rise up out of the ground just before the Fairy Godmother appeared; and this coronet she put into Miss Mary's hands for her very own. And in a moment—Mary winked and rubbed her eyes, but could not think how it had happened so—there was no Princess, no Fairy Godmother, no Fairy Lords and Ladies any longer; only Mr. Greenbeard, with rather a quizzical look on his face and smile on his lips.

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shall all agree with her) declared were only galls made by a certain sort of insects.

And so Miss Mary went soberly home and said to her mother, 'Oh, mother, I am so sorry, there really are no fairies for me any longer!'

THE END

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